

# PLUCK AND LUCK

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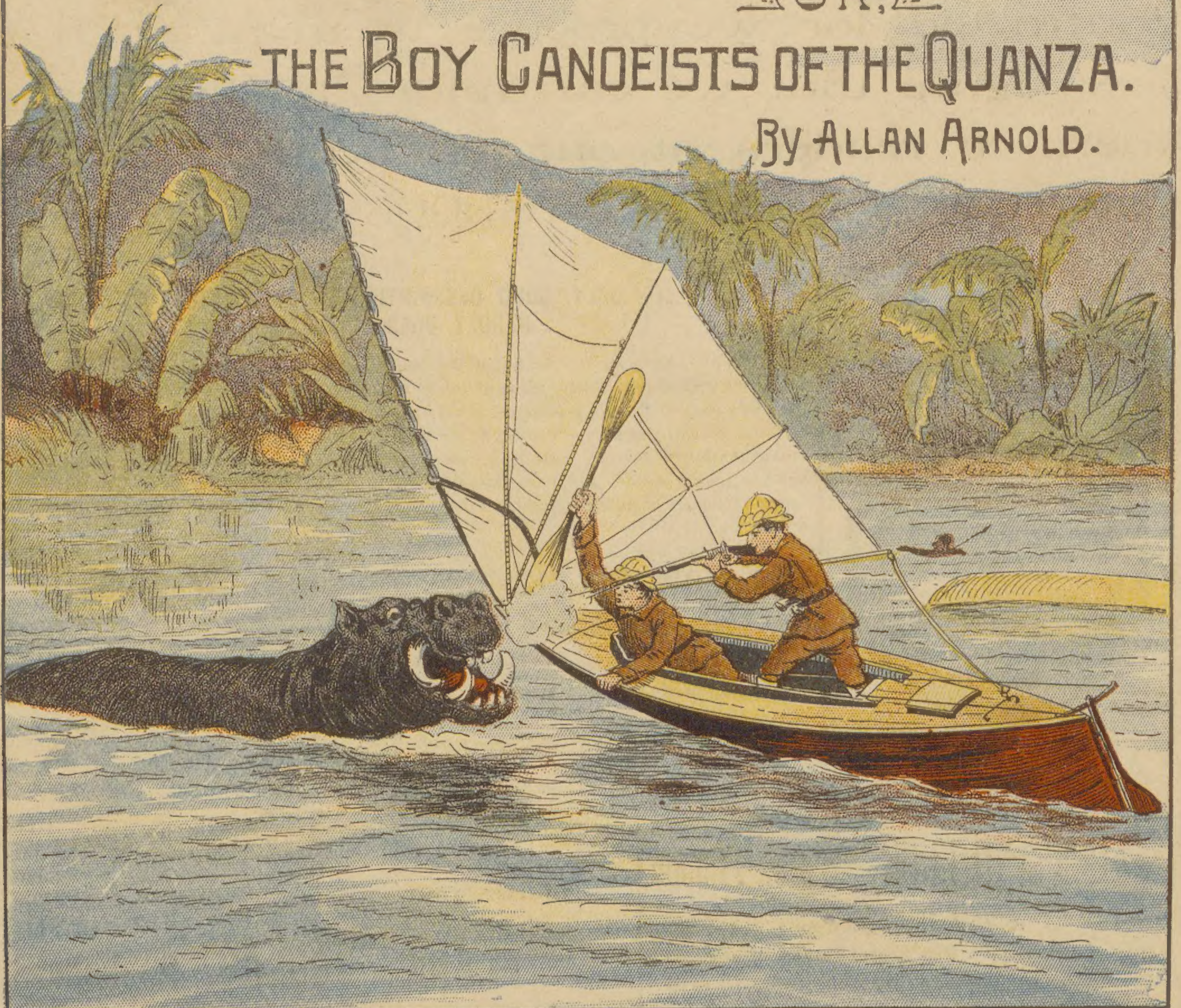
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No. 129.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 21, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

## THROUGH AN UNKNOWN LAND, OR, THE BOY CANOEISTS OF THE QUANZA. By ALLAN ARNOLD.



Harry, seizing his rifle from its resting place in the well, was on his feet in an instant. "Hippopotami!" he shouted, and aiming right for the eye of the huge monster, discharged his piece, while Archie leaned over and was striking at the brute with the paddle.

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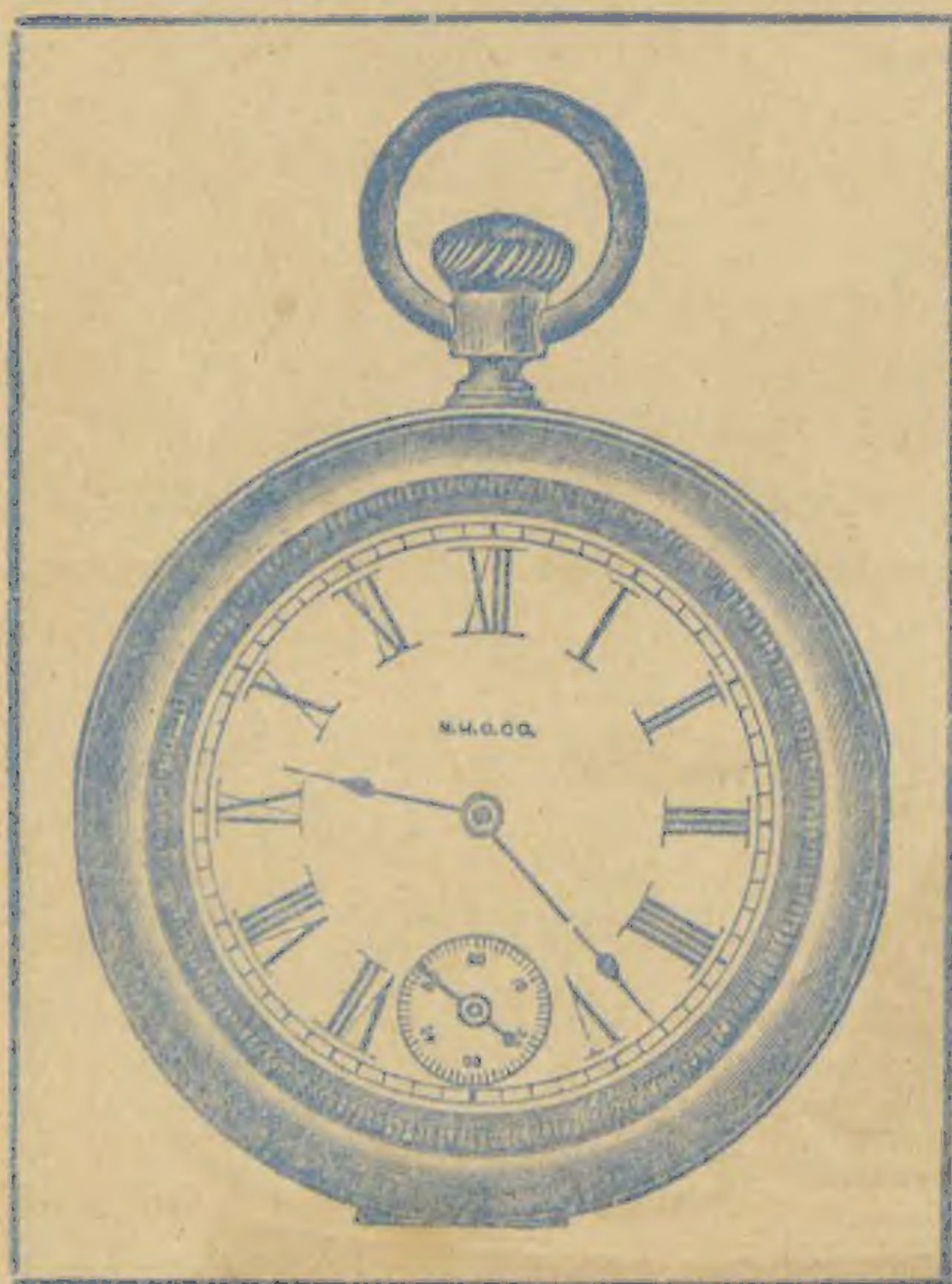
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Complete Stories of Adventure.

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## Through an Unknown Land ; OR,

### The Boy Canoeists of the Quanza.

By ALLAN ARNOLD.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE BRIDEPORT CANOE CLUB.

"I am of the opinion, gentlemen," said Colonel Rodney, rising at the meeting of the Brideport Canoe Club, where hitherto he had been a silent listener. "I am firmly of the opinion that the proper course for this club is to at once appoint some suitable person or persons to go out to Africa and institute search for Dr. Dennerlein, the lost explorer. Beside the facts, known to all present, concerning the valuable scientific work accomplished by Dr. Dennerlein, it must not be forgotten that he is our fellow townsman and an honorary member of this club."

"What is the amount of this legacy?" asked the chairman, who in common with every member of the Brideport Canoe Club present, had been listening with intense interest to Colonel Rodney's remarks.

"The amount, gentlemen," replied the colonel, putting on a pair of eye-glasses and consulting a memorandum book, "is \$5,000. It was left to us by the late Mrs. Pidge, who we all know to have been one of the richest persons in Brideport; and who fortunately—no, I will not say that—unfortunately died two months ago. The money was bequeathed upon the express condition that it be devoted to paying the expenses of one or more members of this club, or any suitable person we might choose to select, to go out to St. Paul de Loanda, on the west coast of Africa, and thence by way of the river Quanza to the country of the Umzielas, where, according to a recently-returned missionary, Dr. Dennerlein is detained a prisoner by the native king, who has become possessed of the absurd notion that our friend is a magician, a worker of charms, spells and the like. The missionary reports that he

is kept shut up in a filthy hut, and allowed intercourse with no one save the king himself and the attendants who supply him with food."

"Is it certain that this missionary tells the truth?" demanded the chairman.

"By no means," was the response of Colonel Rodney. "The report comes to us by the way of London, and may be entirely erroneous. In fact, another rumor—this time coming from an Arabian merchant—says that Dr. Dennerlein succeeded in escaping from the king of the Umzielas, and when last seen was traveling with a small suite in the direction of the Mountains of the Moon."

It was one of the most important meetings the Brideport Canoe Club had ever held since the day its existence began.

In its way the Brideport Canoe Club had become famous, and all present felt that it would never do to allow a reputation honorably acquired for courage and skill to lapse, for want of a little effort now.

The Brideporters were splendid canoists.

They had beaten the Quahog Club in a race from Brideport to the home of their rivals across Long Island Sound; they had ascended the Hudson river and descended the Connecticut in a body, making an excellent record in the matter of time.

Beside this several picked members had made the descent of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers; starting from Pittsburg and ending their long journey at New Orleans, to say nothing of winning a gold medal the summer previous to this meeting, the prize of the International Canoe race which had come off in England upon the river Thames.

No wonder, then, that the members of the Brideport Canoe Club felt ambitious to prove themselves worthy of the confidence the late Mrs. Pidge had placed in them.

Dr. Dennerlein, though a German by birth, had long made his home in Brideport, where in a pretty cottage not far from

the clubhouse his wife and three small children were bemoaning his absence now.

Dr. Dennerlein was a member of the club, as has been stated. So was Colonel Rodney, the rich shipowner and merchant. So were half the rich men of Brideport beside.

It behooved the membris then to show what sort of stuff they were made of, and in response to Colonel Rodney's address, several were upon their feet at once, full of enthusiasm, and offering to go out to the west coast, and undertake the ascent of the River Quanza to the country of the Umzielas, where all accounts agreed Dr. Dennerlein had last been seen.

"Stay—stay, boys!" cried Colonel Rodney, motioning for silence. "You can't all go—that is certain. In the first place, the money, which, by the way, is now stowed in our safe there in the corner, would not prove sufficient for the expenses of more than two; in the next, those of you who have parents might find it somewhat difficult to gain their consent to an undertaking involving so great a risk. I suggest that you select two of your number who are without family ties, and——"

"Harry Hinton!" shouted a voice in the background.

"Yes, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan!" were the cries heard on every side.

Colonel Rodney looked pleased.

It was evident that these were the very boys he had in mind.

At that moment a young man of some twenty years, a great strapping fellow, strongly resembling the colonel, arose and loudly announced himself as entirely willing that the choice of the club should fall upon himself.

"Sit down, Burt, and don't make a fool of yourself," whispered Colonel Rodney. "You know well enough that it is impossible for you to go."

It was Burt Rodney, the rich man's only son.

"I don't know anything of the sort," was the response, spoken in a loud voice. "I can go as well as Harry Hinton or Archie Ryan. I offer myself as a candidate, and——"

"Sit down!" roared the colonel. "I tell you, Burt, it is impossible. You know your mother would never hear to it even if I were to give my consent."

"He, he, he!" tittered old Isaac Leathersides, a regular character in Brideport, who always made it a point to attend the public meetings of the canoe club, addressing his nearest neighbor, "Colonel is ready enough to let Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan go out to Africa to die of fever or be eaten up by lions, since one is an orphan and t'other the son of the town drunkard, but when it comes to his own brat he means to keep him to home."

Fortunately, Colonel Rodney did not overhear this remark.

If he had it would have nettled him—the more so since it was actually the truth.

As it was, he peremptorily ordered his son to sit down for the third time, a command which was sulkily obeyed.

The meeting progressed.

Its sentiment seemed unanimous that Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan should be chosen to represent the Brideport Canoe Club in the matter of the search for Dr. Dennerlein, the lost explorer.

Nor was the choice a bad one.

Harry Hinton was poor, an orphan, the one member of the club to whom woodcraft had been a familiar occupation from birth.

The boy had been brought up in the forests of Maine, where his father had lived the life of a hunter and fisherman; he had only been in Brideport three or four years, and was now living under the care of an uncle who, it was correctly believed, would be only too happy to be freed of the expense of the boy's maintenance, let the terms be what they might.

Archie Ryan, on the contrary, was a native of Brideport,

a young fisherman, whose life had been spent on Long Island Sound.

From Archie's father, his only relative, no objection was to be thought of, since he rarely drew a sober breath during the short intervals when he found himself outside the Brideport jail, and had long ago abandoned all attempts to control the movements of his son.

Then both boys were among the experts of the canoe club, and what was more, both had signified their willingness to go upon this perilous search.

"Good!" cried Colonel Rodney, when the decision of the club was announced at last. "This is precisely as it should be. If you succeed in finding Dr. Dennerlein, boys, it will bring both of us name and fame. One of my vessels sails for Africa within a week. She will touch at St. Paul de Loanda, and you shall go on her. Gentlemen, I move we now adjourn."

"Don't look so down in the mouth, Burt Rodney," said Sam Hillman, one of the club, to the rich man's son upon meeting him outside the clubhouse where the members were dispersing toward their several homes. "We can't all turn African explorers, you know, and you must admit that no better choice than Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan could possibly have been made."

"Don't admit nothing of the sort," growled Burt. "If I can't go no one shall. The old man is trying to make a regular baby of me; but mark my words, Sam Hillman—I'm going all the same."

What did this threat imply?

At the time those who heard it only laughed.

They laughed the other side of the mouth next morning when it was discovered that during the night the safe of the Brideport Canoe Club—a poor, old second-hand affair—had been forced open by means of an iron bar, and that the \$5,000 bequeathed the club by Mrs. Pidge had been stolen.

A sailor belonging to Colonel Rodney's ship, then lying in Brideport harbor, a man named Cal Jenkins, was also missing.

Yet, at the time, no one suspected him. At the end of a week the affair still remained a mystery.

Then came another surprise.

Burt Rodney, taking all his valuables with him, beside a thousand dollars of his father's money, ran away one night, and despite of every effort on the part of the colonel, could not be found.

It was a bad business.

Their legacy stolen, the club found themselves powerless to act.

What was to be done?

Nobody knew.

It began to look very much as though the unfortunate African explorer must be abandoned to his fate, so far as the Brideport Canoe Club was concerned.

## CHAPTER II.

### ST. PAUL DE LOANDA.

"Archie, I feel completely discouraged. The fates are against us—have been against this undertaking of ours from the first."

A dirty seaport town, beneath a burning tropical sun.

Two young men dressed in woolen shirts, light cotton trousers, broad-brimmed straw hats and high-topped boots, suitable to the exploration of tropical wilds.

They sat facing each other upon either side of a table, within a low thatched hut in the "Cidade Baixa," as the lower portion of the town of St. Paul de Loanda, the port and principal

town of the Portuguese settlements at Angola, on the west coast of Africa, is styled.

They were the chosen representatives of the Brideport Canoe Club, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan.

More than two months had elapsed since the night of that memorable meeting, and in spite of every obstacle the young canoeists and would-be explorers now found themselves upon the eve of entering upon their dangerous undertaking.

This was all owing to Colonel Rodney.

When the Fleetwing, the African trading bark, owned by the rich man of Brideport, finally sailed for Loanda, the two boys chosen by the club found themselves on board.

Deeply chagrined by the rascally conduct of his son, to whom the safe robbery came to be generally imputed, Colonel Rodney put his hand in his own pocket and generously donated five thousand dollars to the club.

"Go on your mission, boys," he had said when shaking hands with Harry and Archie at parting on the deck of the Fleetwing. "If you succeed, as I hope and believe you may, you will bring credit to yourselves and to our town. As for my son, who has brought this disgrace upon me, I never wish to see his face again."

Thus the young canoeists had started for Africa, arriving safely at St. Paul de Loanda after a short and prosperous voyage.

The way now seemed plain.

They were provided with two of the club's largest canoes, specially arranged for the work before them, oak-built, and with plenty of towage room provided with extra sculls, paddles, sails and tackle, and in short, everything that seemed desirable for the perilous undertaking in which they were about to engage, such as extra clothing, arms and ammunition, beads and trinkets to be employed as presents for the natives, all packed in such a manner as to permit their stowage in the canoes with the smallest possible sacrifice of room.

At Loanda it had been the intention of the boys to lay in provisions, and to procure a guide who should take them as far as the country of the Quissimas above the trading port of Dondo on the river Quanza.

From Loanda to Dondo the journey was to be made by steamer passing down the coast and up the river as far as the falls of Cambambe, the limit of navigation, where a portage through the forest would have to be made.

All these details, arranged in accordance with the advice of the captain of the Fleetwing, had worked admirably until Loanda was reached.

Here innumerable obstacles were encountered.

It seemed to Harry Hinton and his companion as though some evil genius was at work against them.

The few Americans in the town treated them with rudeness and evident dislike. The United States Consul would scarcely speak to them, and even the Portuguese merchants seemed ill disposed to sell them such articles as they desired.

It is true they received positive information that Dr. Dennerlein had been seen at Zumbo, the principal town of the Umziela tribes, within six months, but for some unknown reason they could find no guide willing to accompany them so far as the Quissima country, where their journey might be fairly said to begin.

What could it all mean?

They had been two days in St. Paul de Loanda now and had accomplished literally nothing.

The little coast steamer, St. Thome was to sail for Dondo and the river Quanza within an hour. The canoes and other luggage were already on board, and yet the young explorers had been able to provide neither provisions nor guide.

"Looks like a regular boycott," said Archie Ryan, in reply to Harry Hinton's remark. "If such a thing were possible I should think that some one had warned everybody against us.

Why, Mr. Briggs, the consul, treated me like a thief when I called on him yesterday. I can't understand it at all."

"Nor I," replied Harry. "It is mysterious enough, but it must make no difference in our plans. We will go on board the St. Thome just as we are. At Dondo, no doubt, we shall find things very different. Anyway, we must take our chances. If we can't get a guide there we will go on without one. These people laugh and sneer at the idea of our ascending the Quanza in canoes at all, much less penetrating to the country of the Umzielas, but we will show them what sort of stuff we are made of. Archie Ryan, come along."

Gathering up such of their possessions as had not been taken on board the steamer the night previous, the boys now wended their way through the narrow, dirty streets of the town in the direction of the wharf.

On their way they were obliged to pass through the square at the back of the custom house, the general market of Loanda.

It was a curious scene, and one which, though not now observed for the first time, did not fail to make a deep impression on the minds of our two friends.

The venders were mostly negro women lightly clad and wearing great flapping straw hats as large as umbrellas. There were no booths, each woman sitting on the ground with her wares placed before her in wooden dishes, which contained small pieces of lean, measly-looking pork, cooked beans, horrible messes of fish, cakes and pastry, etc., everything thickly covered with black flies, and large blue bottles, while the jabbering of hundreds of voices rendered the entire square a veritable Babel of unknown tongues.

As Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan were elbowing their way through the pressing throngs the former felt his arm suddenly grasped from behind.

Both boys halted, turning hastily.

It was a tall Portuguese who had stopped their progress, a man in whom they instantly recognized the captain of the coast steamer St. Thome to which they now were bound.

"Good-morning, gents," he said, in excellent English. "Are you going on board my craft?"

"We are," replied Harry, acting as spokesman. "We are on our way there now."

"Then let me tell you that you had best be plagued quick about it," replied the captain of the St. Thome, offering them his package of cigarettes with much politeness. "I don't know you two any further than that you have paid for a passage to Dondo on my boat, but I do know that Briggs, the American consul, is going to arrest you this morning. If I had known where you were stopping I'd come and told you last night."

"What! Arrest us?"

The exclamation came from both canoeists.

They stood staring at the captain in dumfounded surprise.

"That is what I said," answered the Portuguese, imperturbably. "Your business ain't my business, but I tell you what, I'm ready to sail, and if you'll come aboard now I'll slip my cable and be off at once. It's the only thing that will save you delay if you are in a hurry, for the consul is on the way to arrest you now. You may be detained here for weeks once you fall into the hands of the law."

"But upon what ground does this man propose to arrest us?" demanded Harry. "As United States Consul he ought to use his influence in forwarding our interests, while ever since we landed here his course has been just the reverse."

"It's more than I can tell you, young gentlemen," replied the captain. "Suit yourselves. I thought I'd warn you. Perhaps, after all, it would be better for you to call on the consul and set matters straight; still, if you are in haste to reach Dondo you will take my advice."

Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan consulted hastily.

Both agreed that the sooner they could shake the dust of

this inhospitable town from their feet the better it would be for their plans.

Upon further talk with the captain of the St. Thome they discovered that much of his life had been spent in America—hence his ready sympathy for themselves.

He had been informed of their plans, and was disposed to aid them in every way which lay in his power.

He informed the boys further that he had been approached by certain persons—natives of Loanda—who had offered him money to hinder their movements all he could.

What such persecutions could mean, the kindhearted Portuguese professed himself as much at a loss to imagine as the boys themselves.

Accompanying the captain, the boy canoeists now hurried to the wharf, where a small boat lay in waiting to convey them to the steamer, which lay at anchor beyond the Barra da Corimba, a point one mile south of the town, nearer than which it is impossible for craft of any draught to approach.

Everything being on board the St. Thome, there was no cause for an instant's delay, and at a word from the captain the naked boatmen unshipped their oars and pulled away.

"You've given old Briggs the slip and I'm glad of it," said the captain. "He's a mean fellow, anyhow, and much disliked in Loanda—have another cigarette?"

"What part of the States are you from?" he continued, after the cigarettes had been lighted.

"Bridport, Connecticut," returned Harry.

"Indeed, I lived in New Haven five years myself. Used to run a restaurant for the college boys. Upon my word I wish I was back there instead of in this wretched country. Car-ramba! By the body of San Pablo! If there ain't old Briggs making after us, and the chief of police with him. I'm running a risk in harboring you two fellows, but——"

"Don't get yourself into trouble on our account," interposed Archie. "There is no reason whatever why we should be afraid of Consul Briggs."

"Don't you fret," replied the captain. "My boys can outrow their niggers two to one."

And they did.

By the time the boat containing the consul and the chief of police had arrived alongside the steamer, the captain had already ordered the anchor raised.

"Hold on there, Captain Estanza!" roared the consul, in English. "We want those two persons standing on the forward deck."

In obedience to instructions received from the commander of the St. Thome, our friends maintained a discreet silence.

"What do you want them for?" asked Captain Estanza, leaning over the rail.

"They are a couple of thieves from the States. I propose to send them back."

"What's that you say?" cried Harry Hinton, now goaded beyond endurance. "I'll have you to understand, Mr. Briggs, that——"

Splash!

The sentence remained as yet uncompleted, when a bucket of dirty slops was suddenly emptied from some unseen point in the steamer's waist directly upon the head of the luckless consul, causing him to start backward, lose his balance and topple overboard into the bay.

While he was being fished out by his companions the propeller of the St. Thome began to turn.

"Good-by, Briggs. Hope you are none the worse for your bath!" shouted the captain, by whom this part of the programme had been prearranged.

"I'll fix you when you get back," roared the consul.

It was all he could do.

Five minutes later and the St. Thome was steaming through the placid calm of the tropical sea.

But though they had, thanks to the kindness of Captain Estanza, escaped detention at Loanda, it was with feelings of no little disquiet that the boy canoeists settled down for the short voyage before them.

Who had made these false charges against them?

There lay the mystery.

Not until many days had elapsed were they destined to know the truth.

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN DEADLY PERIL.

Night in an African jungle.

Dense, impenetrable forest to the right, the left—everywhere; the glory of the stars above, thick tangled masses of "jungle grass" under foot.

From such a scene, at the early hour of three in the morning, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan on a certain day a little more than a week after their departure from St. Paul de Loanda, found themselves emerging upon the bank of the river Quanza at a point some miles above the trading post of Dondo.

They had reached at last the end of the preliminary stages of their journey, and canoe life on the Quanza was about to begin.

The voyage to Dondo had been accomplished in safety.

Upon their arrival at this insignificant settlement the boys found, not a little to their disgust, that the same mysterious influence which had been exerted so strongly against them at Loanda had apparently followed them to this remote place.

No one seemed to want to have anything to do with them.

Every one appeared disposed to refuse the helping hand.

In spite of this, however, their preparations had been completed at last, and upon the particular night of which we write their march into the interior began.

In Africa, owing to the intense heat, night traveling is often a necessity.

A guide had been procured at last, who was to take them through the forest around the falls of Cambambe, and thence by way of the river into the country of the peaceful Quissimas a short distance beyond.

This was the journey which had just been accomplished.

The canoes, which had been carried in advance by two stout negroes, were even now resting upon the waters of the Quanza close to the bank.

It was with a feeling of positive relief that the boys now surveyed them.

They were now at the confines of civilization, and the mysterious influence which had been working against them, surely could be felt no more.

"What do you say, Archie? Shall we begin our voyage at once or wait until morning?" demanded Harry Hinton, after the bearers had been paid and dismissed for their return to Dondo and they found themselves with Mingo, the guide, alone.

"I'm for pushing ahead," replied Archie. "There is a fresh breeze blowing up the river and by daylight we will have covered a good ten miles."

It was an impressive scene which now opened darkly before them.

Large trees grew thickly down to the very edge of the water, shading the broad expanse of the river with their dense mass of lofty, spreading, luxuriant foliage. The view was more suggestive of some secluded nook upon the wooded part of a stream in an English park than the banks of an African river. The night breeze rustled softly through the dark green foliage, while the light of the rising moon falling upon the water with gentle brilliancy, greatly added to the general effect.

Aided by the guide, the boys now launched their canoes.

The canoes were of the "double" and "single" build, being ten and fifteen feet long respectively, and fitted up for the accommodation of two persons.

Harry Hinton took "The Major," as the smaller canoe was called.

They were both provided with the most approved sailing gear, jackstays, bridles, downhauls, spinnaker halyards and topping lifts—in fact everything that long experience in canoeing could suggest.

The mainmast in each was placed well forward so as to allow the sails to pass clear of the "well, and jibs had been tabooed entirely, as unnecessary and likely to interfere with the easy working of the craft.

Mingo, the guide, was placed aft in Archie Ryan's canoe.

Fortunately for the boys, the black had picked up English enough at Liberia, the American settlement, to make himself easily understood—a fact for which they had not ceased to congratulate themselves since their departure from Dondo had been taken.

"How far is it to the first of the Quissima villages, Mingo?" asked Archie, working his paddle cautiously as they pushed their way out into the stream from beneath the overhanging trees.

"Much far, mars'. One—two—days troo de woods. One day by de ribber. Hi! Dese funny boats. Neber see de like afore."

"We'll show you what they can do before long, Mingo," said Archie from his canoe. "Say, Harry,"—calling aloud—"aren't you going to put up your mast? Mine is almost ready now."

The canoes had taken the current by this time, and the sharp eye of the guide had not failed to notice that they were moving down stream in spite of all the effort Harry Hinton could make.

"What's the matter?" shouted Archie. "I can't seem to make the slightest headway."

"Get up sail!" roared Harry.

"I can't. I don't dare to stop paddling for an instant. You seem to have forgotten the falls."

Forgotten the falls!

"No, Harry Hinton had not forgotten!

Too late. He now saw that the guide, either through ignorance or design, had brought them to a point on the Quanza at which the strength of the current was beyond their power to resist.

By daylight they might have discovered their danger.

As it was, they had chosen to launch at night, and now death stared them in the face in an awful form.

A moment's consideration showed Harry that the mistake of the black was an accident.

Mingo sat crouching aft in the well of the other canoe the picture of horror and despair.

"Cambambe! Cambambe!" he roared, rolling his eyes wildly. "Dis boat no good. I knowed it. Lordy! Lordy! De Ole Nick get us shuah!"

Meanwhile the two canoes were drifting steadily down stream.

To seek to stay their progress was useless. Nevertheless, the brave boys, both maintaining profound silence, plied their paddles desperately in the endeavor to work toward the bank.

It was a hopeless task.

On—on and still onward they went, the speed of their movement increasing with every second of time.

Now the scene about them changed.

Dark broken masses of sandstone began to rise on either side; the expanse of water became narrower and narrower, moving with a rush which carried the canoes along at railroad speed.

It was all over!

The last chance was gone!

Harry Hinton shipped his paddle silently, and kept his eyes fixed upon Archie, who was still struggling desperately in the effort to work the canoe nearer the shore.

Hark!

It was coming!

Close behind him a dull, roaring sound could now be heard.

Coming!

It had already come!

Death was behind them—the awful moment had arrived!

There was a sudden rush—a whirl—a lunge forward and downward.

The canoe to which Harry Hinton clung desperately had passed over the Cambambe falls.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SCRAP OF PAPER.

In the rush and roar which followed, Harry Hinton, for the first time since the discovery of his perilous situation, completely lost his head.

And there is little wonder.

True, the falls of Cambambe on the river Quanza are no Niagara.

They offer, nevertheless, an abruptness of descent quite sufficient to strike terror to the heart of the navigator unfortunate enough to be caught in the merciless current above.

It seemed to Harry precisely as though the hand of some giant had seized him and suddenly, tearing him from his seat in the canoe and dashing him upon that rush of waters which was to hurry him to his death.

A confusion of thought followed, an instant of almost complete unconsciousness, rudely broken by a series of sharp stinging blows caused by the body of the young canoeist coming in sudden and violent contact with the sharp, projecting surfaces of the rocks which choked the gorge at the foot of the falls.

Though bruising legs and arms severely, this was a most fortunate occurrence for Harry Hinton.

It recalled him to himself.

With that quickness of movement for which the boy had been noticed by his fellow canoeists in far-distant Brideport, Harry flung his arms about a projecting slab of rock just before him, twisted his legs about it also, and for an instant hung suspended above the seething waters.

Then, with a mighty effort, twisting his dripping body this way and that, he succeeded in working himself to a sitting position upon the top of the stone.

He was saved!

To his astonishment, there was "The Major" wedged between two great rocks, close beside him.

But Archie Ryan?

Harry Hinton from his position on the rock saw it all. It was a sight which time can never efface from his memory.

A great body of water rushing through a narrow gorge with headlong fury, the whole stream below white with foam, while the scene was rendered more magnificently impressive by the dark shadows of the luxuriant tropical foliage on the banks.

Nothing could be heard but the noise of the cataract.

A fine rain seemed to be falling! this, as Harry afterward knew, was only the spray from the falls.

And it was at that very moment, when clinging desperately to the wet, slippery surface of the rock, that Harry Hinton, whose thoughts were more for his companion than himself, beheld Archie and Mingo in the act of accomplishing the perilous descent.

It was made in a manner wholly differing from his own.

While "The Major," Harry's canoe, had overturned, the craft bearing Archie Ryan and the black maintained the upright, landing in that position in the midst of the seething pot below the falls.

"The Major" was single built and far lighter than the "Lady Pidge," the two-man boat, rechristened upon the departure of the boys for Africa in honor of the benefactress of the Bridgeport Club.

Evidently Archie had prepared himself for what was to come, for as the prow of the Lady Pidge was seen to project over the verge of the cataract, the light craft appeared to be thrown slightly upward and outward by the very force of the water's descent, with Archie clutching the gun-wale on either side, holding on like grim death itself.

Mingo lay crouching in the well, the top of his woolly skull alone visible.

It all passed like a flash.

A single second and Lady Pidge had dropped into the whirlpool "right side up with care," Archie still holding on unharmed.

"Arch! Arch! Grab my leg!" roared Harry, flinging himself face downward upon the rock and thrusting his leg as far as possible out into the stream.

At this unfortunate moment Mingo the black attempted to rise.

So great was the force of the rapids that it had been all that Archie could do to keep the canoe from overturning.

With the unlucky movement of Mingo Lady Pidge capsized instantly, shooting off into the darkness, the wild cries of the black mingling with the roar of the falls.

Fortunately for Archie Ryan his hands had already grasped the extended leg.

It was done.

The firm pressure of Archie's hands about his extended limb sent a thrill of joy through the heart of Harry Hinton.

Cautiously he drew his leg until Archie himself could grasp the rock.

"Thank God!"

It was all he could utter.

The danger past, Harry found himself a prey to such extreme weakness, that he was scarcely able to maintain his position on the rock.

"By George, but it was a narrow escape!" cried Archie, coolly; "and as I live if here ain't The Major. Where's Lady Pidge and Mingo?—gone to kingdom come, I suppose, and we left here with only one canoe. Was there ever such infernal luck?"

Harry could not speak.

"Are you hurt, old man?" demanded his companion, bending over him. "You must have stuck mighty close to The Major coming over the falls."

"Bruised and battered—that's all."

"All! No it ain't. You are wet to the skin and so am I. Next thing on the programme will be one of those terrible African levers. Come we must make the bank, and I can carry "The Major." We want to strip as soon as possible, light a fire and dry our clothes, and take a good dose of quinine. Are you so used up that you can't lend me a hand?"

"I shall be all right in a moment, Archie. Just let me get my breath."

"Take you time. Say what you like, it was you who saved me, Harry. I would have been knocked to smithereens on these rocks in a moment more if it hadn't been for your leg."

A few moments served to recall Harry's departed strength.

The passage over the rocks up the bank, though rough, was accomplished at last, and Archie all breathless deposited "The Major" on the grassy level above.

"I say, old man, this is a bad beginning, Mingo drowned and

our best canoe gone with all our provisions and traps—what on earth are we going to do?"

"Going to make the best of it," answered Harry, hopefully, now that Archie had begun to take the downcast view, sheer-ing off upon the opposite track. "First thing of all is to build a fire to keep off the wild beasts—I suppose the matches in the waterproof pocket-case are dry—next to strip and wring out clothes."

Such was the programme followed.

Gathering hastily such dry wood as they could discover along the edge of the forest, a fire was lighted in the open, fronting a secluded niche between two great rocks.

Scarce had the ascent of the blaze begun than a wild shout was heard ringing through the gorge below them, followed by a tremendous scrambling over the loose stones of the sloping bank.

Seizing their revolvers from their trousers pockets, the boys, who were both reduced to a state of undress, closely resembling the normal condition of old father Adam in the Garden of Eden, both sprang to the edge of the cliff.

"Mingo, Mingo! That you?"

How breathlessly they awaited the answer.

It came at last echoing through the gorge.

"Oh, laws, yes, marse! Gosh! don't I wish I'd staid in Loandy! Every bless' bone in my body's busted—deedy 'tis!"

A moment later and the sable guide, grunting and groaning, came limping into the line of the firelight.

"Where's the canoe?" were the first words spoken.

But Mingo could not answer.

Either he in a most ungentlemanly manner had deserted Lady Pidge, or Lady Pidge had deserted him—which, he could not tell.

At all events they had become separated, and so far as the Liberian darky could tell the tale, the double canoe with the rifles, spare rigging, presents for the natives, and all the provisions, had met with an untimely fate.

It was depressing—discouraging to the last degree.

Nothing remained but to return to Dondo and arrange for another start.

Just how Mingo had managed to save himself seemed somewhat misty.

The black had clearly lost his head entirely, for he told first one story then another, the substance of all being that when he recovered his senses after the first shock of the overturn he found himself sprawling upon a flat boulder at some distance down the gorge.

That night the boys heard for the first time in its native wilds the roar of the lion.

How near the sounds were it was impossible to say.

Mingo alone of the little party on the rocks slept.

Harry and Archie keeping the fire well fed, sat smoking and talking till morning dawned.

Before the boys could decide upon any definite course of action it was necessary to institute a thorough search for the lost canoe.

If Lady Pidge proved to be safe, a portage above the falls would be the most serious result of their disaster.

Everything in the canoe had been arranged with reference to an overturn, hence there was just a possibility that matters might not prove to be so bad after all.

With the first rays of the rising sun Mingo was aroused and placed on guard of The Major, while Harry and Archie started to clamber down the rocks in search of Lady Pidge.

To their intense satisfaction, they discovered the canoe, bottom upward, jammed in between two giant boulders, not an eighth of a mile below the falls.

"Hurrah!" shouted Archie, bounding over the rocks. "Three cheers for the Pidge! By George, the old lady is worthy of her name."

And so it proved.

Upon righting the canoe and conveying it to the bank above, a careful examination was immediately had.

Few articles of value were missing, and fewer still injured from having remained under the water all night.

Shouldering the canoe between them, the boys now returned to the place where they had passed the night.

Mingo awaited them with a face expressive of much concern, which expression disappeared at the sight of the canoe.

"Golly, mars', you find de boat! Hi! dat lucky We want to get out ob dis place mighty spry!"

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Harry, as the Lady Pidge was dropped upon the grass.

In answer the black pointed silently to a little heap of embers lying upon the ground at a point some ten yards distant from where the boys had lighted their own fire the night before.

"Niggers been here," he said briefly. "Mebbe de Quissima, mebbe de Commi men. De Commi men mighty bad niggars. Dey eat up if dey ketch us. Hi! Bet your life!"

"By George, I believe Mingo is right!" exclaimed Archie, moving in the direction indicated.

"Do you think so?" was Harry Hinton's reply, as he pointed downward toward an empty tomato can lying upon the ground a little to one side. "No natives ever left that here, Arch. Besides, don't you see all this paper scattered about? Some one has been here besides—Thunder and lightning, what is this?"

It was only a scrap of paper which Harry Hinton had picked up from beside the extinguished embers.

Still this in itself afforded the young canoeists of the Quanza sufficient food for reflection.

The paper bore the name of Burt Rodney in the handwriting of that individual himself.

## CHAPTER V.

### UP THE QUANZA—ATTACKED BY A HIPPOPOTAMUS.

What could it mean?

Was Burt Rodney in Africa and in advance of them?

It certainly looked so.

Before many days the boy canoeists of the Quanza were destined to have their suspicions in this regard confirmed.

This happened upon their arrival on the evening of the third day at the principal village of the peaceful Quissima tribes.

The portage above the falls of Cambambe had been accomplished not without difficulty.

It was no light task to carry the canoes by portage through the forest.

It took two to carry Lady Pidge, Harry and Archie taking turns with The Major alone.

That no attempt was made at launching until a point of unquestioned safety was reached, goes without saying.

Indeed, this was not attempted until after nightfall, the boys taking a long rest before starting, and preferring, of course, to pass the hours of darkness upon the river rather than to brave the dangers of wild beasts on the shore.

The wind proved favorable and it was resolved to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered to push on toward the Quissima villages with all possible speed.

The masts were gotten up accordingly, and the sheets raised and secured, and during the hours which followed nothing occurred to disturb the serenity of their progress.

The canoes behaved splendidly.

Harry now took Lady Pidge, and Archie The Major.

Of course The Major kept somewhat in advance, thus prohibiting the possibility of conversation.

Still Lady Pidge held her own, and as he sat reclining in the well, with Mingo snoring lustily, Harry Hinton silently watched the progress of The Major, listening to the strange sounds in the forest about him, wondering what the end of this singular journey was destined to be.

At sunrise next morning the wisdom of night travel was amply demonstrated.

As the canoes shot past the mouth of the little stream, Harry caught sight of a lioness lying flat upon the bank—probably gorged—basking in the early morning sun; and even as he looked another dashed suddenly past, leaping with huge bounds toward a herd of antelope which had ventured to the river bank to drink.

Two days in the village of the Quissimas, then up the river again.

Now the mystery of the scrap of paper was a mystery no longer.

Other canoeists—two in number—were but just ahead of them, having remained among the friendly tribe two full weeks, leaving only a few days before.

Who were they?

From the description of these persons gained through Mingo, who could speak the Quissima language, it seemed highly probable that Burt Rodney was one of them.

Still this was something hard to tell.

To the natives of this part of Africa all white men are simply Oquizis—white spirits. Names count for nothing, and faces for but little more.

At the urgent solicitation of both of the boys, Mingo, the Liberian, agreed to continue with them.

A Quissima guide was also engaged and a native canoe purchased for the accommodation of both the blacks.

Thus, traveling usually by night and resting by day, the boy canoeists of the Quanza continued to advance.

Through the country of the Ukwena, the Munjobar and the Otandos.

Witnesses to strange scenes, strange animals, and stranger men, a hundred miles of the Quanza was left behind as the days flew past.

At all points they heard of the canoes of the explorers in advance of them.

The testimony of each surrounding tribe being to the effect that the mysterious voyagers were Oquizis who sailed in canoes like their own.

Thus far no serious obstacle had been encountered since the accident at the falls of Cambambe.

The natives had been friendly, the winds favoring as a rule, and both The Major and Lady Pidge behaving themselves as well as could be possibly asked.

The health of both the boys—thanks to the medicine chest freely used when passing through swampy jungles—remained excellent, and as they continued to advance, their spirits rose with the belief that the dangers of African travel had been overrated, and that they should be able to push through to the country of the Umzielas with as little trouble as they were having now.

They were destined to receive a rude awakening.

Their troubles had not even begun.

It was at the last village of the Otandos that the boy canoeists of the Quanza had the mysterious voyagers in advance of them again brought forcibly to their notice.

Through the Quissima guide it was learned that these persons had left the village only the night before.

"We shall catch up with them before night, sure," remarked Archie next morning shortly after the start, when, according to a now frequent custom, he found himself seated with Harry Hinton in Lady Pidge, The Major being in tow behind. "I

say, old man, do you really think it can be Burt Rodney? If it should prove so, it would be a mighty singular thing."

"I can't make anything else out of it, Arch," was the reply of his companion. "Every description we get of the fellows tallies so far as one of them, at least, is concerned with Burt Rodney. You know he swore he would go in search of Dr. Dennerlein in any event, and he is reckless enough to keep his vow."

"Who do you suppose the other one is?"

"That's what I can't make out," returned Harry, meditatively, "but it is my firm belief that before another sun has set we shall know the truth."

"If it should prove to be Rodney that might explain the treatment we experienced at Loanda," muttered Archie.

Here the conversation dropped.

The journey that day was through a country more wildly beautiful than any which had preceded it.

Still, it possessed the disadvantage of being the home of a particularly fierce tribe, the Nagoshi, against whom the canoeists had been warned by the Otandos, and, as a consequence, were particularly anxious to avoid.

It had been resolved accordingly to push on all night and endeavor to pass this unfriendly tribe, whose villages were for the most part far removed from the river bank, without being seen.

"I think," remarked Harry just before sunset, "that we had better lay off for supper before long. About nine o'clock we can start again and put it through till morning. What do you say?"

"I'm agreeable," replied Harry, as with his paddle he directed the head of Lady Pidge toward a little cove. "Call to Mingo, will you—Great Caesar! what was that?"

That was The Major, which, even as the last words left Harry's lips, went bounding into the air like a cork, falling again to the surface of the river as suddenly, bottom upward, and with a tremendous splash.

At the same instant there appeared rising above the surface of the water a hideous black head of enormous proportions with an elongated snout like a pig of tremendous length, great bulging eyes and a mouth armed with teeth capable of crushing Lady Pidge into splinters should they once come in contact with her sides.

The beast was swimming directly toward them, opening and shutting its huge mouth with a sort of snorting, rumbling noise, as though wondering who the intruders were and what they wanted.

At the same instant, warned by a cry from the Quissima guide, the boys spied another on the opposite side of the canoe, evidently a female, since she bore a young one on her back.

Harry, seizing his rifle from its resting place in the well, was on his feet in an instant.

"Hippopotami!" he shouted, and aiming directly for the eye of the huge monster, he discharged his piece, while Archie, no less alarmed for the canoe, was leaning dangerously against the gunwale, striking at the brute with the paddle in the endeavor to turn him to one side.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BOY CANOEISTS FIND THEMSELVES IN A TRAP.

Fortunately for Harry Hinton his aim had been for the most vulnerable point of the hippopotamus.

Had it been otherwise certain it is it would have fared badly with Lady Pidge.

Blinded, smarting and assailed in his most sensitive point,

the hippopotamus sank beneath the surface of the river and for the instant disappeared.

Meanwhile Mingo and the Quissima had set up a tremendous shouting, and could be discovered paddling with all their might toward the scene of action.

"Look out! He up in one minute!" roared the Liberian, while his savage companion seizing in his teeth the long assegai, or spear which he invariably kept close beside him in the canoe, plunged boldly into the river with the evident intention of taking a hand in the fray.

"Paddle for the cove, Arch!" cried Harry, sinking back into the well, lest the canoe should be overturned. "We can't afford to risk losing either Lady Pidge or The Major—no not for the satisfaction of capturing a whole herd of hippopotami! By thunder, the fellow is rising again!"

A tremendous snorting had pre-announced the appearance of the hippopotamus.

Streaming with blood, spouting in torrents from his mouth and nostrils, the huge brute now appeared on the surface only to receive thrust after thrust from the Quissima's spear.

The skill with which the negro handled himself in the water was positively marvelous.

Attacking the hippopotamus now on the one side then on the other; thrusting at the eye, the ear, and even between those terrible jaws down the throat, it is probable that alone the Quissima might have ultimately succeeded in accomplishing his purpose had not Harry Hinton, finding himself in close range, brought the combat to an end by a well-directed ball from his rifle, which must have pierced the animal's heart.

The hippopotamus, with a frightful bellow, sank instantly.

It was not until their start two hours later that Harry knew to a certainty how accurate had been his aim, when one of the first things which attracted their attention upon paddling out from the cove was the body of the huge river horse, floating upon its side in the thick sedge close by the bank.

Fear of approaching in too close proximity to the swarms of alligators which they knew to haunt every overgrown part of the river deterred the boys from closer investigation.

Congratulating themselves upon the successful termination of the combat, and above all else upon the narrow escape of the canoes, they paddled out into the stream to begin their night journey, which it was hoped would enable them to pass in safety the dreaded Nagoshi tribes before morning dawned.

From the Quissima through Mingo, they had learned that the usual method of hunting the hippopotamus in the Quanza, is for two or more of the natives to take to the water, and by repeated spear thrusts drive the animal toward the bank.

As the hippopotamus is by natural disposition mild, and very slow to resent attack, there is little difficulty in this as a rule. Once within throwing distance of the bank a harpoon is cast by those lying in wait, and while some pull upon the rope, which for safety is usually made fast to a tree, others throw sand in the eyes of the beast, blinding him, while others still attack him furiously about the head with their spears.

All the Quanza tribes eat the flesh of the hippopotamus, and value them likewise for their hide and ivory. The former from its exceeding toughness being highly prized as a covering for their shields.

The night which succeeded was one of the most beautiful the young canoeists had experienced.

As it was lonely business for Archie Ryan paddling by himself in The Major—there was not a breath of wind—the smallest craft was kept in tow of Lady Pidge, the friends making themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit in the well.

Mingo and the Quissima in their canoe, as usual brought up the rear.

For a long space the boys paddled silently.

The sounds breaking the silence were the hum, chirp and

crack of the innumerable insects and hoarse-voiced frogs, the mournful cry of some night bird, occasionally intermingled with louder and stranger noises from the forest which skirted the bank, and again by the ominous splash which told of the presence of alligators on every hand.

"What are you thinking about, Arch?" asked Harry, breaking the silence at last.

"I was wondering whether or no we should overtake those mysterious fellow canoeists of ours to-night, Harry; and you?"

"Well, for my part, I've about ceased worrying my head over them," replied Harry. "I was thinking of what the end of all this is to be. Here we are going further and further into an unknown land, and thus far with the exception of our mishap at the falls, all has gone as serenely as though we had been doing the Hudson or the Connecticut. It can't always be this way, and do you know, Archie, somehow the idea has seized hold of me to-night that trouble ain't very far off?"

"Nonsense; you are morbid, old man. You need a good dose of quinine. If you go to talking that way I shall think the jungle fever is taking hold of you. Look on ahead there—did you ever see the fire flies so thick?"

Harry Hinton turned his gaze in the direction indicated.

From among the trees just around a sharp bend in the river innumerable tiny lights could be seen flashing here and there.

For several moments Harry watched the lights without speaking.

"You are sure they are fire flies?" he asked at length.

"Why, of course—what else should they be?"

"I can't tell," returned Harry, doubtfully, "they don't look like fire flies to me. Hadn't we better hold up and ask the Quissima?"

"Nonsense!" was Archie's reply. "There you go with your morbid notions again. I tell you they are fire flies. Of course out here in Africa they are bigger than at home, besides don't you see Mingo is doing the paddling. Probably the Quissima is asleep."

Though still doubting, Harry said no more, and the canoes shot on toward the bend.

The nearer they approached the larger the lights seemed to grow until all at once they disappeared entirely.

"Now what's become of your fire flies, Arch?" whispered Harry, as the canoe shot round the bend. "I tell you again, I don't like it. I'm for a wait until the other canoe comes up."

"Perhaps it would be better," said Archie, speaking less confidently, "though I still maintain my theory. Brace her, so we won't slip back with the current. Mingo's canoe will be along in a moment, and then—Lord help us! what a fool I am! We are in for it now."

At the point where the boy canoeists now found themselves the Quanza had narrowed suddenly.

Scarcely had the exclamation of Archie Ryan found utterance than from out of the shadow of the overhanging trees sundry dark forms came shooting forward toward them.

It needed but a glance to divine their character.

They were canoes filled with dusky figures, armed with long assegais or native spears.

They seemed to spring from the bank to the right, the left—to rise before and behind them.

Now too late the boy canoeists realized the danger upon which they had fallen.

The savage Nagoshi were upon them a hundred strong.

the canoes of the fierce Nagoshi which had so suddenly sprung up about them. Paddle, man, paddle! If we can gain that point we can take to the woods and may yet be able to escape."

"It ain't any use to attempt to run away, Hal," was the whispered response of Archie Ryan. "Sooner or later we have got to meet unfriendly natives, and we may as well face the music and take our first lesson now."

"But according to our Quissima guide these Nagoshi are cannibals."

"Not a pleasant prospect, I grant you," returned Archie, with a shrug. "But where is the Quissima? I can't see the other canoe anywhere—it was close behind us when this thing began."

"Blest if I can see it either," said Harry, straining his eyes behind him. "Say, Arch, here's a mighty singular thing. Those fellows in the canoes don't seem to see us at all. They act precisely as though they were after some one else."

It was singular, but it was so.

Sheltered beneath the deep shadows of the foliage which covered the point referred to by Harry, the canoes, while easily enough seen by any eye sweeping the bank on that side, were yet in such a position as to be out of the range of vision of any one gazing directly up the stream.

And such seemed to be the action of the native canoeists who swarmed about them.

They were paddling furiously up the Quanza, with attention riveted upon a white object, of which the boys could just catch a glimpse of among the dense growth ahead.

"They don't see us, Arch!" breathed Harry. "Strange as it may appear they have not spied us yet."

"I can't believe it possible, Hal. Nevertheless, we must act on that theory. Gently now. Work her in short; if we can get under the shadow of that great overhanging tree they may pass and never spy us at all."

"Not likely, Arch, but all the same we will give them every chance to oblige us. What can have become of Mingo and the Quissima? I'd give a dollar to know?"

"Now, never you mind Mingo and the Quissima," returned Archie, working his paddle noiselessly. "They know how to take care of themselves a precious sight better than we do. What is that white thing ahead there—that's what I want to know?"

"Looks mighty like a canoe sheet."

"So it does. Can it be——"

"Our mysterious canoeists!" breathed Harry. "There is scarce a doubt of it. See, the Nagoshi are making for that bend ahead there. If those are white men and in peril, ought we not go to their assistance?"

"Burt Rodney?" muttered Archie.

"Well, even so. We can't sit idly here and see him massacred. Besides, we don't know that it is Burt Rodney. and——"

"But look what a swarm of them there are," breathed Archie, as the canoes of the Nagoshi, four and five abreast, went shooting past them, "a hundred won't begin to tell their number. No, no; our only chance is to stay here under the shadow of these trees and keep as still as mice."

It was hard to distinguish features among the swarm of dusky forms which now shot past them, still there was sufficient light to show the boy canoeists that these were negroes of a most savage and terrifying appearance, naked save at the waist, and armed with assegais, larger and more formidable than any they had seen among the tribes already passed.

It was at this particular moment that the loud report of a rifle broke the stillness of the forest.

The report was followed by a second and a third, and accompanied by a most terrific yelling.

That the mysterious canoeists were ahead of them, and the object of the Nagoshi's attack could be no longer doubted.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CAPTURED BY THE NAGOSHI.

"Arch! We are in for trouble at last, just as I said," breathed Harry Hinton to his comrade canoeist, at the first discovery of

Evidently the sound of firearms was no novelty to these savages.

Instead of deterring these in the hindermost canoes it seemed to act only as a spur to greater effort.

It had likewise another and more startling effect, and one fatal for the continued security of our friends.

For whatever reason the torches of the Nagoshi, which Archie Ryan had mistaken for fire-flies, had been extinguished, they were now as quickly lighted again.

From many of the canoes they shone forth, shedding a weird radiance upon the surrounding scene.

"We are lost!" gasped Harry, as the sudden blaze disclosed their hiding place. "Arch, they see us! They see us! Look! There they come! Now, what on earth are we going to do?"

"Fight for it!" cried Archie, seizing his rifle from the well. "We'll give them a warm reception at all events. Ha! there go those other fellows again! If they can fight so can we."

"Put down that gun," exclaimed Harry, earnestly. "I tell you, Archie Ryan, it is useless. Look at the numbers against us. We can make more by trying to conciliate them than by fighting. At best we could only kill a dozen or so. Keep cool now and let us try to make friends."

There was no opportunity for further discussion.

Four of the canoes of the Nagoshi were now making directly for them with shouting savages, many of whom stood upright and were brandishing their spears.

Meanwhile the firing around the bend had ceased, and from the loud and triumphant shouts which could be heard in that direction it appeared that the mysterious canoeists had been overpowered at last.

Summoning all his courage, Harry Hinton seized the paddle and forced Lady Pidge toward the advancing blacks, Archie, by his earnest request extending his hands in token of friendliness.

The effect of this maneuver was instantaneous.

Though the canoes continued to advance the spears were lowered, showing that the signs of submission were well understood.

Our friends were surrounded instantly.

Amid a tremendous clattering they were dragged from Lady Pidge into the native canoes.

It would be untrue to say that they were not surprised.

They were, however, not surprised at the result.

They were, however, not surprised at the result.

ly threw them down in the bottom of the great canoe, flashing the torches in their faces curiously, chattering and shouting as they paddled up the stream.

It was a bad state of affairs enough.

Not daring to attempt to raise themselves the boys remained huddled side by side at the feet of the dusky rowers.

It was all up with "Lady Pidge" and "The Major."

From the sounds about them there seemed no doubt that the other boats were taking the canoes in tow.

Now we have just discovered the

Now we have just discovered the

Now we have just discovered the

Now we have just discovered the

Now we have just discovered the

Now we have just discovered the

Meanwhile the canoe was moving toward the bend with great rapidity.

It rounded the point presently, and even in their recumbent position the boys could see that they were surrounded by the canoes which had previously passed them, among which were also two dainty crafts, constructed on the same model as their own.

To whom did these belong?

There lay the mystery.

It was a mystery destined to receive a speedy solution, for, when less than five minutes later a landing was effected in a little cove on the north bank of the Quanza, and the young canoeists dragged out upon the shore, the first person upon whom their eyes rested was Burt Rodney, their missing fellow member of the Brideport Club.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### QUENGUEZA.

"Say, Arch, are you alive?"

"Alive! I should say so, though dear knows, how long either of us will be," was the reply of Archie Ryan, as he leaped from the hut which formed the floor of a curious cone-shaped hut. "Upon my word, Hal, I believe I've been asleep after all."

"So have I. It must be morning. There is another day before us, and the question is what is to happen next."

It was a very serious question.

Miles from the banks of the Quanza, prisoners in the principal village of the fierce Nagoshi, which they already knew to bear the name of Quengueza, the prospect which lay before the boy canoeists was anything but flattering to say the least.

Still our friends had chosen the part of wisdom in endeavoring to make friends with the savages.

Although they believed to the contrary the Nagoshi were not cannibals.

They were, however, a numerous and powerful tribe, who lived in a state of perpetual warfare with their neighbors, from whom the chances of escape were very slim indeed.

Upon landing a march through the forest to Quengueza had immediately been undertaken.

Placed between two powerful blacks, but not in any way confined, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan had toiled wearily into the heart of the forest, reaching the principal village of the Nagoshi at something after midnight.

With Burt Rodney it had been quite different.

His hands had been bound behind him and he had been hurried off in advance of the others before either of our friends had an opportunity to address him by so much as a word.

In the darkness and confusion the boys had been unable to discover Rodney's companion.

Nor was anything seen of Mingo and the Quanza.

What they did see was their own belongings from Lady Pidge and The Major shouldered by powerful savages and carried off after them on the march.

The canoes, together with those of the

Now we have just discovered the

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Now we have just discovered the

window, no one entered the hut during the entire day nor the night which succeeded, though food and drink in the shape of a frightful mess of half-burned meal and warm foul-tasting water was passed in at times through the hole.

To have broken out from their prison would have been a task of easy accomplishment; but as it had been discovered almost at the first that the hut was surrounded by a guard of at least twenty of the Nagoshi, armed with long assegais, the boys concluded not to make the attempt.

It was not until the evening of the second day that their situation changed materially.

The fact was—although not until afterward did the boys discover it—the chief of the Nagoshi was absent on one of his warlike expeditions, and had but just now returned.

It was just as our friends were preparing to settle themselves for the night that the door of the hut was opened at last, and the savage who had acted as their escort during the march through the forest appeared, and led them into the presence of the chief.

Now for the first time the boys had opportunity to see into what sort of a place they had fallen.

This appeared to be a compact mass of perhaps a hundred conical huts, constructed of dried grass fastened to a rude frame of poles in the very heart of the forest.

In the centre of the group was an open space of considerable dimensions, in which sat upon the ground, surrounded by the elders of the tribe and numerous torch-bearers, the chief of the Nagoshi, a fierce-looking savage, with face hideously painted, ears and nose adorned with great copper rings.

A long palaver followed, of which the boys could, of course, understand nothing.

It seemed to relate principally to the distribution of their own property, and that which must have belonged to Burt Rodney.

The canoes, it is true, were not visible, and probably still remained at the cove, but rifles, boxes of beads, cloth and other articles intended to be used as presents for the natives during their journey, were all massed into one heterogeneous pile before the chief.

Nothing of Burt Rodney was to be seen.

Had they killed him?

Upon that score the boys could form no conclusion; nor did the result of the palaver serve to make their own future more plain.

Evidently no agreement as to the distribution of the captured property of the young canoeists was arrived at, and amid the beating of tom-toms and after an infinite amount of angry wrangling, the whole affair was seemingly adjourned until some future occasion.

All the goods were conveyed to the hut next adjoining the prison of Harry and Archie, being left there under guard.

The boys were then conducted back to the hut.

Meanwhile the night advanced.

Had even the two venturesome members of the Bridegroom's Club been disposed to seek it, would have been an impossible task.

The boys were, however, not without their own resources, and they were not without their own resources.

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What in the name of sense do you suppose is the matter

now?" said Archie Ryan, standing on tiptoe and straining his neck to catch a glimpse of the crowd in the open square.

"Well, what do you see?" whispered Harry, approaching close beside him.

"That our guard has vamoosed for one thing. The whole town is in the square having a jolly time, as near as I can make out. They are dancing around one of the funniest-looking specimens that you ever saw."

Harry thrust his face to the opening alongside that of his friend.

Certainly there had been no exaggeration on Archie's part.

In the centre of the crowding Nagoshi was to be seen a tall, gaunt negro with his long wool straightened with oil and hanging about his neck.

By the light of the flaming torches the boys could see strung about his body the skins of birds, beasts and fishes, besides many other curious objects, the nature or purpose of which was wholly beyond their skill to divine.

From the head of this strangely-clothed person a pair of branching horns projected, while a tail, evidently that of a lion, the skin of which was drawn about him, dragged upon the ground behind him.

Immediately in the rear of this singular figure walked a lithe young negro, with his head, face and shoulders entirely enveloped in a leopard's skin, wearing upon no other portion of his body covering of any sort.

"By gracious, if that ain't the Old Boy himself it's his brother!" whispered Archie Ryan. "Look! See him whirl himself around and throw up his hands toward the sky. What on earth do you suppose he is about?"

"Unless I'm greatly mistaken he's a rain maker," answered Harry, who had read more carefully upon the subject of African explorations than his companion. "You know when we were at the Quissima villages they told us that the whole country had been suffering from a fearful drought. That's what he is, you may depend upon it; a rain maker from some other tribe."

"Why not a Nagoshi?"

"Well, perhaps I should have said from some other village. You heard that tremendous shout which went up just after they brought us back here."

"Certainly I heard it. It was loud enough."

"That was probably when the rain maker and his companion entered the village. But see here, Arch, the guards have left us and there's nothing in the world to hinder our getting out of this wretched shanty."

"And if we did—what then?"

"We might take to the woods; we could easily manage to get a start before they saw us, since every man, woman and child in the village is taken up with the rain make."

"To be eaten up by lions or stung to death by snakes, I thank you. For my part I'd rather be roasted at once and have done with it."

"But we might be able to find our way back to the river. I have no doubt the canoes are still there."

"That's true, but I don't know if I could find my way back."

"You can't find your way back, Archie Ryan."

"That's true, but I don't know if I could find my way back."

"That's true, but I don't know if I could find my way back."

"That's true, but I don't know if I could find my way back."

"That's true, but I don't know if I could find my way back."

It was scarcely necessary to look

The sound now heard from without the hut indicated but too plainly how well the fears of Archie Ryan were founded.

Nevertheless, Harry, who had moved back from the opening a moment previous, now thrust his face close to it again.

Had the whole village gone mad?

Surely it seemed so.

Uttering wild shouts, and making the most fantastic gestures, the Nagoshi, to a man, were rushing toward the hut in which the boys were confined.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RAIN MAKER AND THE ORACLE.

Within the hut Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan stood gazing at each other with blanched countenances.

"It's no use mincing matters," whispered the former, in a hollow voice. "Arch, there can't be any doubt that it's all up with us now."

"If we only had our rifles I'd show them that we are game to the last," muttered Archie, between his clenched teeth.

"But we haven't, and even our revolvers, worse luck, we were fools enough to put in the locker of the canoe."

But there was no time for further reflection.

The last words of Harry Hinton were scarcely uttered than the door of the hut was torn violently open, and in stalked the old chief of the Nagoshi, while hundreds of dusky forms crowded behind him in the breach.

Fully expecting to be set upon instantly, Harry seized a rude sort of stool—almost the only furnishing of which the hut could boast, and flung himself in front of his companion in the firm determination to sell his life as dearly as possible.

A surprise, however, awaited him.

Instead of attacking his prisoners, the chief of the Nagoshi bowed before them so humbly that his woolly head almost touched the floor of the hut.

"Sa—ka, bona, inkosi!" he said three times in quick succession—words not understood by the young canoeists, but signifying in the Nagoshi language, "we greet the illustrious strangers."

Though incapable of comprehending the speech of the Nagoshi chief, the boys did not fail to understand his manner, and hastened to meet it half way.

Respect and submission were plainly depicted upon his countenance.

Harry advanced toward him instantly with outstretched hands.

The chief raising himself bowed again and still again.

Then with a gesture he motioned to the boys to follow him, and at the head of the throng which clustered about the door, led the way back into the open space, where the rain maker and his assistant stood awaiting their approach as motionless as statues.

"What can it all mean?" whispered Archie, curiously.

Before Harry could answer, the man of horns sprang toward them, and with an air of great respect bent down and kissed their feet.

The boys, lost in wonder, remained motionless.

Suddenly the rain maker sprang up and waving his hands toward the sky, uttered loud and piercing cries.

It was strange—nothing more than a singular coincidence of course—but the heavens which had been ablaze with stars earlier in the evening were now seen to be dark with clouds.

What the man was saying was of course beyond the comprehension of the prisoners.

Suddenly he paused in his wild gesticulations, and turning

toward his companion whose head was buried beneath the leopard skin, uttered a few rapid words.

He of the leopard skin seemed to play the part of an oracle for the words now spoken in answer were immediately communicated by the rain maker to the assemblage.

Their effect was instantaneous.

Leaving their prisoners unguarded save for the women and children who clustered about them, the men of the Nagoshi now rushed in a body toward the hut in which the goods taken from the canoes had been deposited, presently returning loaded with the belongings of the canoeists which they deposited in a heap at their feet at the same time giving utterance to the wildest shouts.

At this moment a few drops of rain began to fall.

The effect upon the assemblage was tremendous.

With frantic cries of joy they formed themselves into a ring, and a wild, fantastic dance began.

Squatting in the centre of the circle the chief placed the boys in the post of honor beside him.

Facing them and taking no part whatever in the performance stood the rain maker, while the oracle in the leopard skin, gliding to one side, disappeared from view.

The ornaments and scanty covering worn by the Nagoshi were thrown hastily to one side.

Led by a gigantic brave the rain dance—for such was the nature of this singular exhibition—now began.

Their stamping and gestures were furious, their grinning and formidable white teeth glistened ferociously, their cruel black eyes flashed with seeming fury.

Never until now had Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan so fully realized the true character of these savage men who held control of their fate.

It was a hideous, almost demoniacal hurly burly.

The young men and women kept apart, but all the old and ugly hags kept running around the circle waving flaming torches, or making a harsh, cracking noise, horribly like the breaking of bones, by striking together flat pieces of wood, all of them joining in pouring forth the most frightful shrieks.

The small boys helped them, too, in this, and in rushing frantically around the warriors.

Meanwhile, the fiendish black figures in the centre sprang and whirled about in the wildest fury, stamping and dashing their feet to the ground, horribly contorting their bodies and vociferating appalling yells.

And all this so accurately together and in such perfect time as to seem positively supernatural, and prove to the startled onlookers awfully oppressive in its strange, weird, unearthly savagery.

Meanwhile the chief never moved a muscle of his countenance.

As for Harry and Archie, they could only gaze spellbound.

Even had they attempted to speak, so frightful was the din that their voices would have been utterly lost.

It was in the very midst of all this that Harry felt a hot breath against his cheek.

"Don't 'ee turn round, don't 'ee move, Mars Hinton," a voice from behind was heard to whisper. "You're all right. We save youse. Does you want dat oder feller saved, too?"

## CHAPTER X.

### SUCCESS OF THE RAIN DOCTOR'S RUSE.

The voice which had whispered in the ear of Harry Hinton as he sat beside the chief of the Nagoshi upon the ground, a witness to the wild "rain dance" of that savage tribe, could belong to one person only—Mingo, the Liberian.

Yet, when Harry turned his head, no one in any way resembling Mingo could be seen.

There was the rain maker's oracle, his head covered with the leopard skin, standing close behind the chief, with concealed features and folded arms.

Like a flash it occurred to Harry that beneath that leopard skin must rest the well known countenance of the black, and it is needless to say that the thought sent to his almost despairing soul a thrill of hope.

It must be thus—it could not be otherwise.

There was no one else behind them excepting the naked Nagoshi dancers, shouting, yelling and tossing their dusky limbs this way and that.

It was impossible that the whispered words could have come from any other source than the concealed lips of the oracle who stood behind the chief.

What was to be done?

A movement on the part of the Nagoshi chief had evidently frightened Mingo. If Mingo it was, and perceiving the keen eye of the old black fixed upon him, Harry deemed it wiser to wait before making any move until some more auspicious time.

It came shortly.

Within the next five minutes the chief who had been growing more and more uneasy in his movements as the dance progressed, suddenly sprang to his feet, and casting aside his scanty garments, dashed into the midst of the whirl.

The oracle in the leopard skin instantly slid into his abandoned place between the boy canoeists, and in a low tone breathed Harry Hinton's name.

"Mars Hinton!"

"Is that you, Mingo?"

"Suah, Mars! Suah!"

"And the rain doctor—don't you dare to move a peg, Archie Ryan."

Archie, who at the first sound of Mingo's voice had half risen, at this whispered warning sank back into his seat.

"De rain doctor? He Olenda (the Quissima guide of the boy canoeists), mass'; him an' me ketch de real rain doctor, an' steal him close. Olenda know him business. He make run, you bet. It done come for suah!"

"Mingo, you're a brick!" was Harry's answer, given in a low, excited whisper. "If we escape out of this with our lives be sure neither Archie nor I will ever forget this; but what can you do?"

"Olenda he done it already, Mars Hinton. Dis kentry all dried up. He promise chief he send rain when dey gib him your tings and let you go with him fo' slabs."

"And when do we start?"

"Soon de dance done, mighty soon. Sooner de better. Hi, dar! Maybe it don't rain, and den dey kill us, suah."

Here was an appalling reflection!

During the passage of this conversation the cunning black stood as motionless as a statue.

The boys likewise, though, as may well be believed, in a fever of anxiety, did not look toward him, but pretended the most intense interest in the dance.

"How 'bout old oder feller?" came the voice from beneath the leopard skin, presently. "Am he friend of yours? Must we take him, too?"

"Yes, Mingo. He also must be saved if he is still alive. Have you seen him? Is he alone?"

"He's alive, mars. He's in one dem huts. Far's I know he alone. He kill chief's brudder. Mighty hard job to get him off, but me try."

At this instant the dance suddenly ended.

The Nagoshi crowded about the rain maker, who resumed his incantation.

Though there were occasional drops, and the clouds grew blacker and blacker, the rain still obstinately held off.

The oracle in the leopard skin had now resumed his place beside the rain doctor.

"It begins to look as though there were some hope for us," whispered Archie Ryan, drawing nearer to his friend.

"Don't be too sure, Arch. If the rain would only come one might think so. Look! Look! They are bringing Burt Rodney before the chief!"

It was so.

With arms bound behind him the son of the great man of Brideport was now led into the ring, and placed before the rain doctor, whose antics grew wilder than ever as his eyes rested upon him.

The critical moment had clearly come.

Of course it was but a lucky coincidence.

The shrewd Quissima had chosen his time well.

At that moment the rain, which had held off so long began to fall in torrents upon the Nagoshi village, extinguishing torches and creating the wildest confusion among the inhabitants.

The effect was instantaneous.

With his own hands the chief removed the cords which bound Burt Rodney.

Harry and Archie were immediately seized and all three of the boys loaded down with such of their belongings from the canoes as it was possible for them to carry.

Upon the rain doctor and his oracle hampers of provisions were then bestowed.

Waving back the chief and those who would have crowded around him, once these preparations were complete, the Quissima, followed by Mingo, Burt Rodney and our two friends, with stately tread marched between the line of huts out of the village and into the forest beyond.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LOST IN AN UNKNOWN LAND.

Morning, in the heart of the trackless forest!

The rising sun beheld our young friends, the boy canoeists of the Quanza, in camp beneath a giant tree of unknown name, making the best of a bad breakfast prepared from the provisions bestowed upon Mingo and their Quissima guide a prey to reflections of anything but a pleasant kind.

They had escaped from one danger only to fall into another quite as serious.

They were lost.

Lost in an unknown land!

All night long, in the pouring rain, their march through the forest had continued, in the expectation of encountering the river which should not have been more than two hours distant from the Nagoshi village.

This expectation had remained unfulfilled.

During the first hours their progress had been one of triumph.

No sooner had the shouts of the savages died away behind them than Olenda, the Quissima, threw aside his rain doctor's toggery, embracing the boys with all the joyful demonstrations of some faithful dog.

Of course Harry and Archie were not slow to respond.

Through Mingo—who came in for his share of thanks—they conveyed to Olenda the full sense of their gratitude, learning at the same time how witnessing their capture by the blacks, he had followed them through the forest to a point within sight of Quengueza.

There, accompanied by Mingo, he had lain in wait, trying to devise some plan of rescue during the days which suc-

ceeded, when at last, by great good fortune, they had encountered a rain doctor from a neighboring tribe, who was on his way to the Nagoshi village at the special invitation of the chief.

What they had done with this person the boys wisely refrained from inquiring.

Mingo assured them that they had not harmed him, and with this assurance the boys deemed it best to let the matter drop.

The ruse of Olenda had proved an entire success.

To these faithful friends the boys owed their lives, and surely that was enough.

"Look here, Harry, what's to be our next move?" said Archie Ryan, when breakfast was over at last.

Mingo and Olenda were busying themselves with packing the belongings of the travelers into the smallest possible compass, while Burt Rodney, who had kept himself in a fit of the sulks from the time of leaving Quengueza until now, had wandered away a short distance from the camp.

"To hold a council of war, I say," replied Harry, with all the cheerfulness possible. "We've managed to miss our way, which is certainly most unfortunate; but now we've got daylight to help us, perhaps we shall be able to find it again. First of all, Burt Rodney must be made to talk."

"The surly scoundrel," said Archie, angrily. "Do you know, Hal, I half wish the Nagoshi had refused to give him up. A dozen times I tried to talk with him last night. The fellow has no more gratitude about him than a cat."

"You are right. Still he is here and we have got to travel together. Do you know that when I tried to find out how he came to be in that canoe, and who his companion was, all the satisfaction I got was to be told to mind my own business."

"My experience exactly."

"If our situation was less serious I would be for parting company with him," replied Harry, meditatively, "but as it is we must make the best of the fellow. Remember, Arch, we owe a great deal to Colonel Rodney and it won't do to go back on his son."

"Yes, we owe our present situation to the colonel," replied Archie, gloomily. "For my part I almost wish——"

"That he had never put up the money to take us to Africa. Look here, Archie Ryan, you are getting discouraged—that will never do."

"Well, ain't it enough to discourage one?"

"Perhaps it is, but think of Dr. Dennerlein and his situation. Pretty rescuers of a lost explorer we shall make if we give up at the first misfortune."

"It ain't the first by a good deal, Hal. We've had nothing but trouble ever since we landed in this wretched country——"

"Hush!" whispered Harry. "Here comes Burt; let me try what I can make out of him. Perhaps he has come to his senses by this time."

But Burt Rodney had evidently done nothing of the sort.

He showed a disposition to be coldly civil, and that was about all.

In response to the earnest inquiry of the boys, he absolutely refused to communicate any part of the history of his doings after leaving Brideport.

All that they could get out of him was that in spite of his fall he had managed to get to Africa and start up the Quengueza in canoes with a friend.

Who this friend was he refused to state.

He had been hit by the spears of the Nagoshi, and falling into the river had perished.

"It's no business of your fellow who he was," had been the answer to their questions. "I didn't come to know anything more of your old friend, either. As soon as we struck the river I propose to make back tracks to the coast, and I suppose you are about ready to do the same."

"Not by any means," answered Harry. "I've been talking to Olenda, and he feels confident of finding the path, now that it is daylight. If we reach the cove where we were captured, in safety, and find our canoes all right, I for one, am going right on."

"Well, I shan't go with you," was the sour reply. "Wish you'd left me where I was. Might as well have died one way as another. It's my belief that we'll never get out of these woods alive. I was a blamed fool to come to this beastly country at all."

And, as a matter of fact, it began to look as time went on as though Burt Rodney was right.

Day succeeded day and night followed night until a full week passed, and still the boy canoeists remained hopelessly lost.

It was a serious case.

Their clothes were giving out, their provisions were getting low. Even Olenda and Mingo had abandoned all hope.

The canoes they would never see again, of course; it would be a matter of thankfulness if their lives were preserved.

During these days of wandering a sort of armed neutrality had sprung up between Burt Rodney and our friends.

This was rendered absolutely necessary by their perilous situation.

Though well satisfied that their earlier troubles were entirely due to the false statements made to the authorities at Loanda by their surly companion, the boys made no allusion to the matter.

Burt Rodney held himself in a state of perpetual opposition to Archie Ryan, though with Harry he was more civil, and inclined to defer to him at times.

And so the days passed drearily on.

The effort now was to gain the country of the Ishogo, a friendly tribe, whose habitations were supposed to lie somewhere to the northeast.

It was a most unfortunate thing for our travelers that the compass which would have stood them in such excellent stead in their present predicament was the one thing which, when they came to examine their belongings, recovered from the Nagoshi, could not be found.

Its loss was the cause of all their troubles.

Burt Rodney had also lost his compass, claiming that it must have been left in the canoe.

Possibly he was right, although, as few of the goods belonging to him had been recovered, it seemed quite as likely that it fell into the hands of the savages at Quengueza.

Let it not be supposed, however, that these trying days were entirely without moments of enjoyment.

Still in the possession of their rifles and ammunition, thanks to Olenda, the boys enjoyed many exciting hunts, encountering strange beasts of which the very names were unknown.

It was on the morning of the eighth day, just as our friends and the sullen Rodney were in the enjoyment of a bath in a little stream by the side of which they had passed the night, that the most startling of these forest adventures occurred.

Olenda had started off to ascend a slight elevation visible at some distance away, in the hope of being able to spy out the Ishogo villages, when Mingo, who was supposed to be going to the roasting of a small animal of the deer tribe for the common breakfast, came dashing toward the bank of the stream, his eyes fairly starting from his head in terror, and giving utterance to the most despairing cries.

"What is it?" shouted Harry, swimming toward the bank.

"Oh, mar! Oh, glory! Beastee big as lion come grab de back of de tree, right under my nose. Lordy-Lordy! Too big would grab me, too."

"How?" yelled Burt Rodney, who had long since proven himself a first-class coward. "Don't go a lone, Harry! Don't go a lone, unless you want to be eaten up. Don't for

heaven's sake! If anything should happen to you, we might as well all of us give up the ghost!"

And while Archie Ryan followed Harry's example in making for the bank, the colonel's son swam out into the middle of the stream.

"'Tain't lion!" shouted Mingo. "What I say is beaste big as lion."

"Where's my rifle?" cried Harry, springing up the bank. "Oh, here it is. Come along, Arch. Don't stop for your clothes. Thank goodness there's no one to steal them. If Mingo ain't drawing the long bow we ought to be in for some sport."

"You ain't going to leave me here alone, are you?" roared Burt from the water.

"You'll have to come along, Rodney, or be left behind, one or the other. We need all the provisions we have got, let me tell you, and I don't propose to have them stolen, either. What sort of a creature was it, Mingo?"

"Dunno, Mars Harry. Mebbe tiger."

"Nonsense! There are no tigers in this part of Africa. You're sure it wasn't a gorilla?"

"De big man monkey?" queried Mingo, whose acquaintance with African zoology was not as good as that of the well-read Harry.

"Yes."

"Him no monkey, Mars. Him walk on four feet. Golly! How I know his name? It don't make no difference, neder. He cotedched de buck, and he'll cotech you if you go back. T'ink I stay 'long o' Mars Rodney. Dis chile don't care much 'bout 'lein' chawed up."

"We will soon see what sort of a customer we have to deal with," exclaimed Harry.

Slipping on his shoes as a precaution against snakes, and followed by Archie Ryan, Harry now crept noiselessly along the bank of the stream toward a point where the smoke of the camp-fire could be seen ascending among the trees.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A FOREST COMBAT—A FRIGHTFUL DISAPPOINTMENT.

"What sort of a brute do you suppose it is, Hal?" asked Archie, as they crept along.

"A leopard most likely," was the reply. "Lions are seldom met with in this country. They live in the banks of rivers and the open lands. This creature of Mingo's ought to be a leopard as far as my knowledge goes."

"Here! Hold on, you fellows! You ain't going to leave me behind, for I won't be left!" came the voice of Burt Rodney, shouting in their rear. "If you think I'm dead you're greatly mistaken, for——"

"Don't talk so much," called Harry, curtly, from over his shoulder. "If you are coming, Rodney, you want to make less noise."

Harry subsided, muttering, and with Mingo crept after the boys.

As they were about to enter the forest, the air was broken by a fierce, agonized roar. Harry put his hand against Archie Ryan's naked arm, Harry halted, listening.

"What's that?" he asked, looking back over his shoulder at the boys.

"I don't know," replied Archie. "What's that?"

"I don't know," replied Archie. "What's that?"

"Sounds like a snake," suggested Rodney.

"An' dat's jest what it is," put in Mingo, who was trembling like a leaf. "Better keep away, Mars Hinton. Let him hab de buck. What we care? Guess you kin shoot anoder. Lor's a massy! Dere goes de critter again!"

But Harry was in no mood to abandon the hunt thus tamely.

Creeping around toward an opening among the trees, the boy canoeists now found themselves witnesses to one of the most terrific combats it had ever been their fortune to behold.

As they did so the roaring was repeated again and again, mingled with muffled, strangled, agonizing sounds which told them plainly that something far beyond the ordinary was transpiring behind the trees.

And so, indeed, it proved.

Peering through the opening, they beheld a young leopard of no great size locked in the deadly embrace of a huge python beneath the tree next adjoining the one under which the fire had been lighted.

It was a terrific sight.

The python with its tail coiled around a bough had lowered himself, seizing the leopard, evidently unawares, while the latter had been in the act of devouring the half-roasted buck.

The unfortunate feline was held in such a way as to be entirely helpless, and was fast being strangled, before them, its eyes starting furious and hideous from its head, its great red tongue swollen and extended while vainly gasping for breath.

The struggle was accompanied by frightful roars, mingled with the hideous hissing of the snake.

Crushing and squeezing with its huge and powerful folds, the boa would spring its arched neck and head backward and forward in fury, its long, thin, forked tongue darting in and out, and its horrible eyes flashing with a fierce and baneful aspect like electric sparks.

"Jerusalem!" cried Burt Rodney. "I don't stay here."

He sprang back and would have fled precipitately had not Archie caught his arm.

"Hold on, you fool!" he cried, disgustedly. "Who ever saw such a baby! Hold on. Don't you see Harry is taking aim? His shot will put an end to the combat, though for my part I'd like to see them fight it out, and——"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three shots from Harry Hinton's Winchester rifle awoke the echoes of the forest even before Archie's sentence was complete.

The first, aimed with unerring precision, put the leopard out of the combat, and the second and third were equally effective against the frightful snake.

"Hurrah! Hal's done it!" shouted Archie, leaping toward the scene of the combat.

"Mighty lucky t'ing dat leopard came along or de snake would have been de victor," remarked Mingo, as the boys looked on the writhing reptile, whose huge tail, having lost its hold on the bough above, fell to the earth with a thud.

That day and the next the lost canoeists reveled in fresh meat, which, if somewhat strongly flavored, was still by no means to be despised.

Olenda's observations from the top of the hill proved to amount to nothing.

Day succeeded day, and still the wanderers in this trackless forest, footsore and despairing, toiled wearily on.

Clearly they had lost their bearings completely.

The next day, still the same, when the boy canoeists, who had been from Quengueza had laid so strong a claim on their hearts, were at fault.

They could find no path that they were now lost in the forest, and the night was closing in.

Harry and Archie, who would have been lost long since, were still there, for it had become fully evident that they

should ever again emerge from the shadow of those never-ending trees.

There is nothing endless.

Even to this dreadful jungle there came an end at last.

It was just at nightfall on a certain day of the third week after their departure from Quengueza.

The shadows had become so dark that Harry, who had come to be tacitly acknowledged as the leader of the little band, was just about to order a halt for the night and the fires kindled as usual for the purpose of keeping off the wild beasts, when he suddenly perceived an increase of light ahead.

Calling the attention of his companions to the light they hurried toward it.

Nor had they far to go.

A hundred yards covered the intervening stretch of forests.

This traversed, the canoeists found themselves face to face with a new discouragement which reduced the hopeful feelings which had suddenly sprung into being within them to the lowest ebb.

Instead of a clearing and the huts of some native settlement, to which they had confidentially looked forward, there could be seen stretched out before them a trackless waste of burning sand extending as far as the eye could reach.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A DESPERATE SITUATION.

For the space of many moments the boy canoeists of the Quanza stood gazing out upon the scene of desolation before them, too much overpowered to speak a word.

Olenda, the Quissima guide—whose guidance had proven so utterly ineffective—had fallen upon his face, and seemed muttering some sort of prayers.

As for Burt Rodney, he was too deeply overpowered with fatigue to apparently comprehend the new danger which now faced the little party.

For several days the colonel's son had been acting strangely—so much so as to suggest a disordered mind, in point of fact—and now, instead of showing either curiosity or interest, he seemed only to realize the fact that the day's journey had come to an end, flinging himself at full length under a giant palm, and immediately dropping off into a troubled sleep.

"Look here, Hal, I'm afraid we've come to the end of our rope," said Archie Ryan, at length, as with each succeeding moment the night shadows settled lower and lower upon that awful expanse of sand. "I've tried to keep up my spirits, hoping against hope, but now——"

"The last state of that man is worse than the first," interposed Harry Hinton, quoting Scripture gloomily. "To be frank with you, I doubt very much if we ever see Brideport again."

"What is it, Hal—the Sahara, or great desert?"

"No, no. You forget your geography. We ain't within a thousand miles of the Sahara. Don't forget that we entered this frightful country by way of a river in Lower Guinea. Where's Mingo? It may be that Olenda knows something, if we can get it out of him."

"He was close behind us a moment or two ago—— There he comes now running among the trees with some sort of a goat slung over his shoulder. Come, Hal, we have got our supper, at all events. We will try and make the best of a bad business. Come what may, I know you will stick to me——"

"To the death, Archie Ryan," breathed Harry, grasping the hand of his friend and pressing it warmly.

"And you know," said Archie, "that I stand ready to follow you across that desert the instant you say the word. As for Burt Rodney, I don't think he will trouble us much longer. The fellow is completely played out, and that's a fact. If a fever should seize him now it would make short work of him, I'm afraid. Hello, Mingo! What have you got there?"

"Some sort of kid, Mars Ryan. I seen it and managed to get a shot at um. Hi, dar! Some one's got to look out for supper. Olendy he done gone to sayin' prayers, Mars Rodney no good, an' you un's all broke up. What a' matter? Hain't got to leabe de woods 'less we want to, I guess. Plenty game and water in forest. Mingo only one what keep him head."

The fact was Mingo had long since proved himself a good deal of a philosopher, and he did not belie his acquired reputation now.

Supper was the next thing in order, desert or no desert, and a very acceptable addition to their failing larder the young goat proved to be.

Burt Rodney was aroused and made to eat with the rest.

The short sleep and the food served to revive him slightly, and although he made but little attempt to join in the conversation, it was evident that he was listening eagerly to the conversation between Harry and Olenda through the aid of Mingo, which took place during the progress of the meal.

The questioning of the Quissima shed no ray of hope upon the gloomy prospects of the canoeists.

Olenda had never heard of this desert, nor could he give the slightest information as to what lay beyond.

It was a desperate situation.

To plunge into the forest again meant death by starvation, for their ammunition was almost exhausted; to push on across the desert would, of course, be madness itself.

The condition of the travelers had now become truly deplorable.

Their clothing was in a dreadful condition, especially their shoes, which had fared so badly on the rough road over which they had traveled that it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could be made to stay on their feet at all.

During the days that followed, matters grew worse and worse.

The course chosen by the little party lay to the southward, since by following that direction there seemed a stronger chance of striking the Quanza.

Sometimes beating their way through the tangled thickets, at others plodding wearily along the burning sand, they kept on, hoping against hope, without the least alteration in their situation occurring.

In some places the forest extended further out into the desert, at others the sand seemed to have forced itself in among the trees.

Over all an awful stillness reigned. Birds and animals seemed alike to shun the awful desolation, and in their search for game they were, as a rule, obliged to penetrate into the woods to the distance of at least a mile.

On the fifth day Olenda, the Quissima, was seized with a raging fever, and to the great sorrow of all, died the succeeding night.

They buried the faithful fellow in the midst of a little palm grove in the early morning, and unwilling that even so sad an event should hinder their progress, by sunrise had resumed their weary march.

Night came again and brought no change.

With the reduction of their number the carrying capacity of our party had been so reduced that it now became necessary to abandon the greater part of their goods.

Indeed, it was only Harry, Archie and Mingo who could carry anything, Burt Rodney having been brought to such a deplorable condition that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could walk at all.

"I think," said Harry, as they lay in camp just inside the tree line that night, "that we had better stay over here a day or two and try to recruit. It is no use for us to put in another day of this terrible march with Rodney in the condition he is. Did you notice how wildly he talked just before he dropped off? I tell you, Arch, if the fellow ain't crazy already he will be soon."

Harry Hinton was first to awake the next morning.

Rising from his grassy couch beneath a spreading palm, he crossed the short stretch of woodland which intervened between the place of their encampment and the desert and paused to view the dreary waste once more.

A surprise awaited him.

Instead of the vast sandy plain of endless extent, there now burst upon the vision of the young canoeist a great sheet of water at apparently no great distance away, beyond which rose a chain of mountains of towering height, with fertile lowlands at their base covered with a heavy growth of nodding palms.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### OUT ON THE DESERT—MINGO'S DISCOVERY.

"Archie! Oh, Archie!"

The loud shout of joy which burst from the lips of Harry Hinton at the scene before him brought Archie bounding to his side.

"What is it, Hal?"

"Look! Look! Don't you see? Water—mountains—an inhabited country. It can't be over twenty miles away. One day will bring us there, and if by God's mercy we fall among a friendly people, at least our lives will be saved."

From beneath his hand Archie Ryan gazed out upon the desert long and earnestly.

"You are right," he murmured, thankfully. "You are right. Let us wake up Rodney, the news may do him good. Hello, Mingo—this you? Look out there. What do you think of that?"

"Don't tink much ob it," replied the Liberian after a moment's hesitation. "Don't like de looks ob t'ings nobow. Dere's big sand plains up in my country. I've seed sich t'ings before."

"What do you mean, you black rascal?" cried Archie, angrily. "Haven't you got eyes to see?"

"In course I has. See too good. Dem's no mountains, neder is dat 'ar water. Only ghoses, mars, only ghoses."

"Ghosts!"

"Ghoses ob water and ghoses ob mountains, mars. Dey ain't real. Better stick to de woods. Anyhow, we hab 'nough to eat an' drink."

"He means the African mirage," muttered Harry in despairing tones. "Heaven grant that he may not be only too near the truth."

"Mebbe I'se mistaken, but I don't believe I is," was the dogged answer of the black. "I go whereber you go. Mebbe Mars Rodney see it, an' dat's what for he go."

"Rodney—what do you mean?" exclaimed both the boys in a breath.

"Mars Rodney he done lit out, and take all de grub wid him. Can't find him nowhere."

Here was startling information, which upon investigation proved to be correct.

Harry and Archie hurried back to camp, and for the next four spent their time beating about the forest, calling the name of their companion aloud.

It was a useless effort.

Not only was Burt Rodney gone, but he had taken almost everything in the shape of provisions with him.

At sunset he had not returned.

Long before the day came to a close the boys knew, to their intense disappointment, that Mingo had spoken the truth.

With the rising sun the sheet of water and the mountain range beyond disappeared like so much mist.

"I tell you what it is, mirage or no mirage, I'm for pushing out into the desert," said Harry that night as they sat in camp.

"And starve to death or perish of thirst," replied Archie Ryan, gloomily.

"Not at all. Of course you understand the nature of the mirage. There can't be the appearance without something to back it up."

"Meaning," said Archie, who was trying to fasten his shoe together by the aid of a jack-knife and the tough tendrils of a climbing vine, "that the mountains and the water are real things, after all, only a great deal further off than they appear."

"Precisely. At least so far as the mountains are concerned. The water may have been only an illusion. My eyesight is the best, as you know, and just at sunset I took a long look out upon the desert. It seemed to me that I could see real mountains among the clouds, which for days we have noticed hanging close to the eastern horizon. I'm for gathering together what food and water we can and striking out boldly. If after a day's journey we see nothing ahead of us we can at least come back."

"I'm with you, Hal, wherever you go," was Archie's reply.

And so it was arranged before they lay down to sleep.

Two days elapsed before the boy canoeists put their new-plan into execution.

By night of the second as large a supply of meat and edible roots as they could carry had been got together, the united result of a forest hunt on the part of Harry and Archie and the efforts of the black, whose acquaintance with the vegetable productions of the woods was, of course, superior to their own.

Two goat-skins, tied up at the head and legs, so as to form very respectable bottles, served to contain their stock of water, and into one small hamper, which they all proposed to take turns in carrying, beads, looking-glasses, and a few other articles, intended to be used as presents for the native tribes they hoped to encounter, were securely packed.

Up to this time not the slightest trace of Burt Rodney had been found.

Much as our friends disliked the surly fellow, his mysterious absence caused them genuine sorrow.

Had he gone mad in the night and wandered away into the depths of the forest across the desert?

It was all guesswork.

They had searched for him everywhere, but in vain.

It was clearly useless to delay their progress any longer on his account.

They were off by sunrise.

At the start the wonderful mirage was there again to cheer them on their way.

So plainly could they see the mountains, every outline of peak and crag being present before them, that it seemed absolutely impossible to believe that the sight was unreal.

Yet as the sun rose higher the vision faded, and by ten o'clock there was nothing to be seen before them save the endless expanse of the burning sands.

Harry and Archie walked side by side, each carrying his gun and a sort of knapsack which they had brought with them from Brideport, to be used on short hunting expeditions, while Mingo, with a goat-skin of water slung over each shoulder and the hamper containing such articles as the boys had chosen to preserve between them, toiled wearily behind.

For the first few hours their way lay over a plain covered with coarse, shifting sand of a whitish color, into which their feet sank at every step.

"We'll put in one day of it, at all events, Arch," remarked Harry to his friend as they were resting in a hollow depression a foot or two below the surface of the plain. "I've been very careful to take our bearings. The forest range is almost due east of us. We cannot make any mistake should we want to return."

"The upper part," replied Archie. "The upper part is called the *epithelium*."

The cry of the black came from the southerly side of the hollow, breaking upon that awful stillness in ringing tones.

THE DEATH OF BURT RODNEY.

"Is that you, Hinton? I'm burning up, I think. Give me a drink of water, for God's sake. What's the matter with the canoe? I can't seem to make any headway. Oh, dear, I wish my mother were here."

"We must get him back to the hollow," whispered Archie.  
"He's as crazy as a loon." /

In spite of the contempt in which he held the fellow, Arthur Ryan, whose nature was highly sympathetic, could not keep back the tears.

"I'm afraid you are, Rodney," was the sad reply.

There was a moment of awesome silence.

Then raising himself slightly, Burt Rodney spoke:

"It serves me right," he said, in a faint voice. "I have no one but myself to blame. Hinton, if you and Ryan ever get back to Brideport, tell them—tell my father——"

"Yes, Rodney, yes."

The voice was growing fainter now. It was painfully evident that the end was near.

"Tell my father that it was I who robbed the safe in the clubhouse. Cal Jenkins helped me. We came out to this fearful country, and——"

"And it was this Cal Jenkins who was with you the night we were captured, Rodney?"

"Yes. We came together. I tried to hurt you, boys, and I'm sorry for it. I told the consul at Loanda that you were a couple of thieves, and——"

He stopped.

Slowly the eyes closed and breathing ceased.

"Go on, Rodney," whispered Archie Ryan. "What made you leave us?"

But Harry, who had been watching the sufferer intently, now gently laid the head back upon the sand.

"He has spoken his last words, Arch," he said, in a quiet tone. "Let us forget that we have anything to bring up against him. God knows how soon we may be called upon to share his fate."

And above the body of their erring companion the boy canoeists of the Queen soon saw by star beneath the stars.

Burt Rodney was dead.

Dead in an unknown land.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### DESPAIR.

"Hal, it's no use. I can't go a step further. God help us! This night's going to be our last, I'm afraid."

"All right, I'll don't up," said Mingo, pitifully. "All my heart goes out to you. Will somebody'd kick me, dead and I do!"

And as Archie Ryan flung himself upon the burning sands of the African desert, Harry Hinton sank beside him and buried his face in his hands without speaking a word.

It was only the Liberian who appeared to have retained command of himself; and he, with despair imprinted upon every line of his face, looking on with a look of intense pity upon the suffering youths to whom he had grown so much attached as a faithful dog, started off in quest of water, which now alone could save all three from death.

In the midst of a trackless desert without water and scarce a breath of life.

He had seen the desperate situation of the boy canoeists of the Queen, and on the third day subsequent to Burt Rodney's death.

It was a despair which had seized hold upon Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan—black despair.

Not a word was spoken.

And as the sun set below the eastern boundary of the awful plain, Harry Hinton left Archie Ryan in a most precarious position, and he himself, although he had not allowed a murmur to escape his lips, was in a worse condition than his friend.

The boys had come about by accident.

In the morning the boys had buried the remains of their companion in the sand. They had then, all three, the first one of their number had by Burt Rodney had a body which.

It was a sad office, but stern necessity compelled its quick performance.

It was evident enough that the wretched youth had been out of his mind when leaving his companions so abruptly.

Not even a trace of the stolen articles could be discovered near the spot where Mingo had found him.

Maddened with fever, perishing from hunger and thirst, the only son of the rich man of Brideport had met his end.

The last sad offices performed for their companion, the discussion between Harry and Archie was whether they should proceed or retreat.

The rising of the sun settled this point.

Now, for the first time, the eastern sky was cloudless, and they could plainly distinguish the long chain of the Mocambe Mountains in the distance, apparently not more than one hundred miles away.

This time the appearance was no mirage, but an actual fact.

Despairing entirely of ever being able to extricate themselves from the forest which they had left behind them, the boys determined to push ahead boldly, believing that they could gain the mountains by the third day.

The first day's journey was a terrible one, but our friends bore up under it well.

Hourly the mountains seemed to draw nearer and nearer, filling their souls with renewed hope. By noon the forest line disappeared.

It was at the start next morning when the accident happened.

Mingo, who had lagged behind, in running to catch up managed to fall sprawling upon the sand, bursting both the water-skins and every particle of the precious fluid was lost.

Here was a dreadful dilemma.

Now they were in the middle of the desert, it was hard to decide whether it was best to advance or retreat.

They chose the former.

The forest meant death sooner or later. Once they could gain the mountain range there was at least a chance that their lives might be preserved.

So the boy canoeists toiled on and on over the sandy plains.

Night brought no relief to their sufferings, and in addition to the lack of water, such of their food supply as remained had become absolutely unfit to eat.

It was a horror.

The third day's journey was a terrible one, and when it came was impossible.

They could go no further.

Before them rose the mountains in all their grandeur, but alas! Still a weary day's journey away.

Was he dying?

Harry Hinton, who had been so firm and brave, now firmly believed it.

His tongue, swollen with fever, had slipped out of the roof of his mouth. His bones were racked with pain, his head burned with fever.

And as the sun set below the eastern boundary of the awful plain, Harry Hinton left Archie Ryan in a most precarious position, and he himself, although he had not allowed a murmur to escape his lips, was in a worse condition than his friend.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A TERRIBLE DILEMMA.

Not a word was spoken. The boys had buried the remains of their companion in the sand.

And as the sun set below the eastern boundary of the awful plain, Harry Hinton left Archie Ryan in a most precarious position, and he himself, although he had not allowed a murmur to escape his lips, was in a worse condition than his friend.

was bending over him who pressed a cup of water to his lips. Harry drank eagerly.

He did not even stop to raise his eyes to the face of the man until the last drops in the cup were quaffed, and even then the glance was but momentary, for a terrible weakness seemed to have gained full possession of him, and he closed his eyes and slept.

Now it was morning.

The sun was just raising itself above the edge of the desert, ushering in another day of that dreadful, scorching heat.

This time it was Archie Ryan who stood beside him with a curiously shaped vessel in his outstretched hand.

"Do you feel better, old man?"

"Yes—yes, I think so," was Harry's reply, as with difficulty he raised himself and stared about. "What's the matter, Arch? Where did you get that water? Give me some more, for heaven's sake. Have I been very sick?"

"Almost died," answered Archie, shortly. "If I'd known how bad you were, Hal, I wouldn't have given up last night the way I did. Our lives are safe for the present at least. Look there!"

Harry, drinking the water, turned his gaze in the direction indicated, and to his surprise saw, at a short distance away, a tent pitched upon the desert, before which a man in curious garments calmly sat smoking a long-stemmed pipe.

There were also two other men who seemed to be cooking something over a fire, and three camels standing behind the tent.

"Arch, who is it?"

"An Arab trader, I guess," replied Archie, shrugging his shoulders. "He came along last night just in time to save our lives; though I am not at all certain that it would not have been just as well if he had let us die."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that he intends to make us his slaves. He has appropriated our rifles and all our goods, and Mingo has already been taken off by his friends, who started an hour ago."

Harry buried his face in his hands and for a moment or two did not speak.

"We were mad to come to this country," he said at length. "Arch, what can we do?"

"Nothing! Nothing but to grin and bear it. Hush! He is coming toward us. Keep as cool as you can now—it's the only way."

The man who sat before the tent had arisen, and pipe in hand now approached.

Addressing some words to the boys in a harsh, guttural language, he asked by signs to Harry how he felt.

Harry nodded, staggering to his feet and supported by Archie.

"Takul?" (Do you want to eat), said the Arab, pointing toward the men about the fire, who were in the act of removing an earthen pot containing a steaming mass.

Both the boys signified in the affirmative.

Then the Arab, who was an old man, with a large gray beard and a kindly expression of countenance, put his arm about Harry's shoulder, and with all the tenderness of a father led him toward the tent.

The contents of the pot proved to be the stewed flesh of some animal, probably a goat.

Placing himself upon the ground between the boys, the old man thrust his fingers into the pot, pulled out a piece of meat, and began to eat.

His companions, who seemed to occupy the position of servants, had meanwhile retreated, and could be seen loading great bales of goods upon the camels, which had now been brought around in front of the tent.

"Fingers before forks," laughed Archie Ryan, thrusting his own into the cooking pot. "Perhaps after all it ain't

going to be so bad. The old graybeard was kind enough last night, and if it had not been for the medicine he gave you I believe you would have died."

"When did he come?" asked Harry, wearily, as he followed his friend's example and began to eat.

"Something after midnight. Mingo and I were just wild about you. I made sure you were dying, and was trying in every way to revive you, when all at once I heard a noise behind us, and there they were."

"If we could only make him understand us we might——"

"Ismail," said the old man, turning suddenly toward them, pointing toward himself and then at Harry, with a questioning air.

"That must be his name," whispered Archie. "He wants to know yours."

"Harry Hinton," said our hero, slowly pointing toward himself.

"O Spanniah?"

Harry shook his head.

"O Francie?"

"He wants to know whether we are Spanish or French," whispered Harry, shaking his head again.

"No—English," he added, and to his great joy the face of the Arab lighted instantly.

"O, Ingles! O, Ingles!" he exclaimed. "Me know Ingles. Where from?"

The relief of the boys was unspeakable.

A long conversation now followed.

Without much difficulty they were able to understand that the old man had lived in the English settlements at Sierra Leone, on the west coast, above Loanda, and that he was a trader, now on his way to the tribes of the mountain range and beyond.

Nor was this in the least singular.

Arab traders from the coast traverse the interior of Africa constantly. For the most part they are by nature more cruel even than the savages themselves.

Fortunately for our friends the man into whose hands they had fallen was of a character quite the reverse of this.

If his English was faulty his heart was kind, as the boys afterward had reason to know.

It proved to be a far easier task to understand Ismail than it was to make Ismail understand them.

The old man, after much questioning concerning themselves, informed them that he had no intention whatever of stealing their belongings, but since it was necessary for his brother, who accompanied him, to start before daylight, he had sent Mingo and the hamper with him on before, remaining himself until Harry should awake.

In his broken way he made the boys understand that further than to carry them to the villages of the Apingi, as the nearest of the mountain tribes were called, he could do nothing for them.

For himself, he was bound with his brother to the tribes beyond the Congo, and did not intend to return to the coast for at least two years."

"Apingi good mens. No hurt," he said. "You wait. Perhaps I come back. One—two—tree year. We go to Loanda."

It was a discouraging prospect, but one for which there was no help.

Breakfast completed, Ismail administered to Harry a curious medicine of a reddish color from a silver flask.

This seemed to act like magic, and by noon Harry found himself so far recovered as to announce his readiness to start.

Then came the first experience of the boys in canoe riding which brought sensations like being on a ship in a rolling sea.

Thanks to Ismail's instructions they made out very well however, and the journey across the desert began.

Now the prospect which had been raised before their eyes by the wonderful mirage grew into reality.

By nightfall they had gained the first of the Apingi villages among the palm-covered lowlands at the foot of the mountain range—a beautiful country watered by many streams—where they were received by the people with every demonstration of kindness.

They did not pause here, however, but pushed on until nearly midnight, stopping at last at the village of Ashira, situated at the very foot of the mountain, where Ismail's brother was encountered and also Mingo, who was so overjoyed to see the boys again that he could scarcely speak.

By the advice of Ismail, Harry bestowed upon the "Headsman" of Ashira—a vassal of the Apingi king, whose residence was back among the mountains—liberal presents of beads and cheap trinkets in return for which they were given a hut to sleep in and more food than they could eat.

Now, all this was an improvement on their former situation, certainly.

Nevertheless their hearts were heavy when that night they lay down to rest.

Should they ever see home and friends again?

It was more than doubtful.

On the morrow the friendly Arab would have started on his way, leaving them behind, strangers among a strange people.

Until his return, long years hence, if he ever came, how could they hope to escape?

Escape was impossible.

As completely as they had been in forest or desert, the boy canoeists of the Quanza were lost in an unknown land!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AN APINGI PROPHET.

Bang! Whiz!

A fat buck falls dead as the loud report of a rifle rings out upon the mountain side.

"That means dinner, Archie Ryan!" exclaims a firm, manly voice, as a brawny young fellow, clothed in a soft, tanned leopard skin, with trousers of a curious sort of grass cloth, followed by two half-naked negroes, leaps down a crag and gains his prize.

"Sure enough, but it leaves us just one dozen cartridges, Hal," replies his companion, a young man of twenty-two, wearing a heavy black beard and similarly clothed. "However, let's make the best of it and enjoy our dinner. We still have enough left to give old King Macondai a chance to hear the report of a Winchester if we ever reach Nomba-Ombana, as we expect to do by night."

Two years have passed since the night when Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan lay themselves down to sleep in the Apingi hut.

And two years have brought their changes even in this unknown land.

Life among the Apingi has had its trials, yet it has not been without its pleasures.

By the negroes these two young Americans have come to be regarded almost as gods, and every obstacle has been thrown in the way of their escape.

Nor can this be wondered at. Bright boys both, and natural mechanics, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan have completely changed the character of the inhabitants of the little village during these two years.

They have first taught the natives of the Apingi how to use

lessons in iron-working, and instructed them in the manufacture and use of many tools.

Naturally of a peaceful disposition, far-seeing and shrewd, the Ashira Apingi kept the two young strangers closely confined to the limits of the village, in the fear that the king of their nation, who lived back among the mountains, at a town called Nomba-Ombana, should hear of the wonderful things they had done, and take possession of the wonder-workers himself.

And for two years the lot of our friends had been cast among these savages, provided with the best house in the village, with servants and everything the "Headsman" could bestow upon them except permission to depart.

It was a monotonous, dreary existence, and the boys would have willingly made any sacrifice to bring it to an end.

Among their chief regrets was the loss of Mingo, the faithful black having been sold as a slave to a neighboring tribe a few days after their arrival at Ashira. Of course they could never hope to see him again.

Now, there was a prophet at Nomba-Ombana who was as highly prized by the king as were the white wonder-workers by the Headsman of Ashira.

Who this prophet was and where he came from seemed to be a mystery, and was something that Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan—who had by this time become tolerably familiar with the Apingi tongue—had thus far been unable to learn.

Some said he was an Oguizi—white spirit—others that he was as black as his followers.

Two things were certain—first, that he had been captured from a distant tribe at war with the Apingi some time before the coming of the boy canoeists into the country; and second, that no man save the king and his counselors was ever allowed to see his face, since they kept him confined in a cave, from the depths of which his prophecies were uttered, while the wondering natives listened above.

On the morning preceding the particular day of which we write, a deputation had arrived from Nomba-Ombana with the king's command that the two white strangers of Ashira should be sent to that town forthwith.

The order created intense excitement, but the commands of the Apingi king were absolute and must be obeyed.

The prophet had ordered it, so it seemed, stating to the king that unless the white men were brought to Nomba-Ombana he could prophesy no more.

Here was a change in their situation that our friends did not precisely relish, yet one for which there was no help.

Accompanied by the Headsman of Ashira, they had started next morning for the capital of the Apingi country over the mountains, the opening of our chapter finding them indulging in a little hunting by the way.

"What do you think of this prophet, Archie?" asked Harry Hinton, as just at nightfall the boys found themselves descending upon a table-land far up among the mountains upon which the town of Nomba-Ombana lay spread out before them.

"It's a hard thing to say, Hal. From all we have heard about him he must be a remarkable person. It is certain that he has taught the Apingi many things without ever coming out of his cave."

"I firmly believe him to be a white man, detained just as we are," said Harry. "I have had great hopes aroused since we started. You see, I've been questioning the headsman and have managed to get a good deal out of him. This is the first good chance I have had to tell you, and—Hello! We've run right into a white nest of the Apingi, it seems."

It was a deputation come out of Nomba-Ombana to meet them, headed by the King Macondai himself.

And a deed of character on the part of the king was conducted to the town in great state, being escorted to the mouth of the

cave by the king, who informed them that the prophet had demanded their presence as soon as they should arrive.

It was a new and peculiar situation for the boy canoeists.

Let the reader picture to himself a collection of low huts at the foot of a precipice, arranged one either side of one long street and shrouded with giant palms.

It was to one of the largest of the huts situated at the extreme end of this street that the king conducted Harry and Archie.

This was the Apingi temple—the sacred edifice in which the hideously carved idols worshiped by the tribe were kept enshrined.

Entering with his white guests, King Macondai shut the door in the face of the crowd of half-naked blacks who flocked after them.

"My prophet is there, Oguizi," he said, addressing himself to Harry, and at the same time pointing downward toward a round opening in the floor, which was of solid rock. "Speak to him, for he would speak with you. Do not fear him, he is a good prophet. I captured him from my enemies, the Ukambani, and he has brought me only good luck ever since."

With this speech—delivered with that child-like simplicity of expression common to all the West African tribes, Macondai withdrew, having added that it was the desire of the prophet to talk with them alone.

"Nice place to keep a prophet in," said Archie Ryan, peering into the opening suspiciously. "Pah! How fearfully it smells! I tell you it's a mistake, Hal, to even dream of any one but the blackest kind of a nigger living in a place like that."

"I'm afraid you are right, Arch, though I had hoped it might be otherwise."

"Afraid? Hoped it might be otherwise?" repeated Archie. "What on earth do you mean? You wouldn't wish the meanest white man in existence consigned to such a fate as to be stuck for three years at the bottom of a hole like that."

"I didn't mean exactly that," said Harry. "The fact is, I hadn't told you all my suspicions——"

"Bother your suspicions, Harry Hinton! It's hotter than tophet in this shut-up place, and it must be ten times hotter down at the bottom of that hole. If there is a prophet down there, I should say he must be a baked one. But here goes to find out."

Thus speaking, Archie Ryan bent over the hole in the floor.

Nothing but blackness was to be descried below.

"Is any one down there?" he called aloud.

There was no answer.

"You see, Hal? I was bound to give your idea first trial. Evidently Mr. Prophet is not talking to-day, or else he don't understand English. Look here! You speak the Apingi jargon better than I do. Suppose you give him a call, and——"

"Who speaks to me in English?"

A voice like suppressed thunder had pronounced these words suddenly, speaking from out of the blackness of the pit!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DISCOVERY OF DR. DENNERLEIN—HIS PLAN OF ESCAPE.

"Was that you who spoke, Harry?" exclaimed Archie Ryan, springing back from the mouth of the opening in the floor of the Apingi temple as the thunderous voice echoed through the hut.

"I—no; certainly not," replied Harry Hinton, in agitated tones.

"The sound came from the hole, whoever made it. By gracious! there it goes again!"

"Do the white strangers from Ashim address me!" cried Harry, jerking the voice a second time. "Speak! whoever is above

there. God alone knows the joy it gives me to hear a Christian tongue once more!"

"By Heaven! you were right, Hal!" breathed Archie.

"There is a white man down there as sure as fate. What an awful situation! We thought ourselves badly enough off, but his fate is ten times worse."

But Harry Hinton had not paused to listen to these reflections.

Springing forward, he bent over the mouth of the hole and peered down.

There was utter blackness beneath—blackness, foul odors, but nothing else, so far as he could see.

"Who's down there?" he shouted.

There was a sound of footsteps moving upon rocks. Then, after a moment, the voice spoke again, almost directly beneath him, but still nothing could be seen.

"Gentlemen, I am a white man like yourselves, who for years have been confined in this frightful pit. I don't know who you are, or what strange circumstance brought you among this people; but in the name of humanity I implore your aid."

You shall have what aid we can afford you, sir," was Harry's instant reply, "although I fear it will amount to but little. Like yourself, we are practically the slaves of the Apingi. We came among them two years ago."

"Two years—two years!" answered the voice. "If I had only known. Are you English?"

"No, Americans."

"America! I am a German by birth, but America was my home. Would that I had never left it. Speak, my friends. Tell me who you are and how you came here. It is only recently that I learned of your presence among the Apingi. If what the king has told me of your mechanical skill is true, a way may be devised to enable us to effect our escape."

"My name is Harry Hinton and my companion here is Archie Ryan. We are from Brideport, in the State of Connecticut. We came out to Africa over two years ago in search of Dr. Dennerlein, the explorer——"

"Dr. Dennerlein! I am Dr. Dennerlein!" thundered the voice, louder even than before.

Harry Hinton sprang to his feet.

In his excitement he had almost fallen into the pit.

"You—Dr. Dennerlein!" he exclaimed.

"As I tell you," repeated the voice. "Young men, I have heard of you both. Brideport was my home before I started on my last and most fatal expedition. Tell me, if you know, are my wife and children alive and well?"

"They were when we left Brideport," called Harry, bending over the hole again.

"And you came to Africa to rescue me?"

"We started with that intention."

"It was madness—simply madness. From your voice you can be little more than a boy. But, perhaps, after all, by God's direction. I await your story, my courageous young friend, with an anxiety which you can well understand."

And bending over the mouth of the pit, Harry Hinton told his story—told of the action of the Brideport Canoe Club, of their selection for the work of rescuing its honored member, and of the various adventures through which they had passed.

The tale related by the lost explorer was still more exciting.

Held during a considerable period by the Umzielas, who had come to regard him as a prophet and magician, Dr. Dennerlein had escaped at last, only to be taken by the Ukambani, from whom, in turn, he had been captured by Macondai, King of the Apingi, then at war with this neighboring tribe.

It appeared that during the long period an Apingi prisoner had lived in the cave, who had died just previous to Dr. Dennerlein's capture.

Upon his arrival, a captive of Nomba-Ondana, the unfor-

the explorer—whose face as a worker of magic had gone before him—was confined in the cave in the prophet's place, never seeing any one except Macondai and a few of the principal men of the tribe.

the various African dialects with ease, had instructed the king in many useful arts.

So valuable had he proved himself to Macondai, that the shrewd savage had been deaf to all entreaties to permit him to depart.

It was all a wonderful revelation to the boy canoeists of the Quanza.

inspired with hope.

This they owed to Dr. Dennerlein.

"Listen," the explorer had said, when at last his story was completed, "there is a way—and the only one—by which we can effect our escape from the Apingi, and, if fortune favors us, reach the coast."

To what followed, Harry and Archie, bending over the mouth of the cave, listened in rapt attention as may be well believed.

Given briefly—and as we are compelled to hurry on to more exciting matters we propose to be as brief as possible—the plan of Dr. Dennerlein was substantially this:

During his long residence in the cave the explorer had discovered an underground passage leading down the mountain on the opposite side of the range from the desert which our friends had crossed.

This passage terminated on the banks of the Suali, a broad and deep river which, flowing between rocky walls, emptied into the Quanza at a point not more than twenty miles distant.

By aid of this knowledge Dr. Dennerlein could have long ago made his escape had it not been for one reason.

On either side of the river the walls of rock were perpendicular and of great height.

It was impossible to leave the passage except by the river, and without boat or raft advance was not to be thought of, since the perpendicular walls of rock extended for many miles on either side.

"Had it not been for this breathing spot I should have perished long ago," the explorer had said to our friends. "Night after night I have stood by that rushing river longing for the freedom it could give me if I could only avail myself of its aid. It might have been my grave had you not come."

But the boys had come and what was more no one could have been better adapted to take advantage of this opportunity than they.

It was now the 11th of April, and Dr. Dennerlein was contemplating a secret attack upon the Apingi, the Uakandi, further up the Suali, to successfully accomplish which the building of a great number of new canoes would be necessary.

This Dr. Dennerlein understood, and in his role of prophet he advised Macondai to send for the white strangers who had proved themselves such wonder-workers at Ashira and instruct the building of the canoes to them.

As the doctor well knew, when all was in readiness for the expedition there would be a great feast proclaimed for the night before the final start.

"This will be our opportunity," he had added only a moment before Macondai entered the hut and brought the interview to a close. "Build the canoes, and have them in readiness at the foot of the mountain pass. The end of the cave passage is a few feet distant from the only available starting point.

On the night of the feast we must trust to our own strength and the power of the gods. For the rest we must trust to the gods."

And so it was that the boys

Yet up to a certain point, at least, it was successfully carried out.

The headsman of Ashira was forced to return to his village, leaving the two white wonder workers behind him.

War preparations were immediately begun.

Time passed.

Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan had now grown to be regarded by King Macondai almost as gods.

And no wonder.

Twenty large war canoes had been constructed under their direction, and together with those of ruder build already possessed by the Apingi, the landing place at the foot of the mountain pass.

All this was the work of many weary weeks.

Now at last the night of the great war feast had come.

Would the plan of the man whose face as yet they had never even been permitted to gaze upon prove successful?

Not since the night of their arrival had the boys been permitted to exchange a word with Dr. Dennerlein.

So carefully was the hut above the prophet's cave guarded that they never had found means even to enter it.

Since that night two months had passed.

Was Dr. Dennerlein still alive?

## CHAPTER XX.

### THROUGH THE MOUTH OF THE PIT.

"Now is our time, Harry. The jivalar (native African beer) has done its work. Every man in Nomba-Ombana is too drunk to care what the 'white spirits' do. I vote we make a move."

"Hadn't we better wait and see if King Macondai cannot be induced to let us sleep in the sacred hut above the prophet's cave?" whispered Harry in answer to his friend, who sat beside him before the hut of Macondai himself, where for many hours both had been watching the wild orgies of the Apingi war feast.

"Should they happen to catch us entering the temple secretly, there is no telling what might happen—one false move will spoil it all."

"But this delay is just as bad," was the reply of Archie Ryan. "In another hour it will be daylight, and then the whole thing will have to be given up. How many times have you hinted to Macondai that you would like to ask the advice of the prophet about to-morrow's expedition?"

"Three times since midnight, Arch."

"And that is twice too many. I tell you, Hal, it's now or never with us. Come, let us move among the dancers and watch our chance to slip into the sacred hut."

It was as Archie Ryan had said—now or never.

To-night the final stroke must be given or the scheme of Dr. Dennerlein, which was to bring about their escape from the Apingi country, be abandoned for evermore.

No wonder the boys felt more than ever the tremendous mental strain under which their minds had been laboring ever since their discovery of Dr. Dennerlein in the person of the Apingi prophet.

They had been acting under the instructions of that voice which had come thundering out from the echoes of the cave—the man himself they had not even seen.

How was it to be managed?

There were fifty war canoes at the landing, besides the twenty they themselves had built.

Must not their escape be discovered? Would not the Apingi follow in a body, kill them or bring them back?

These were important questions, and one on which the boys

had thought deeply, though of course they stood ready to risk anything if only their escape could be effected from this unknown land.

Early that morning they had taken the precaution to secrete their rifles—almost the only trace of their original outfit which remained in their possession, by the way—among the bushes at the back of the temple in the expectation of the fulfillment of Dr. Dennerlein's promise that the king should that night permit them to sleep in the hut.

This promise had not been realized.

Now for many hours the war dance of the Apingi had been in progress, and the king had not only failed to conduct them to the temple, as the boys had led themselves to believe might be his action, but had refused even to respond to Harry's suggestion that an interview with the prophet was absolutely necessary to insure success against their enemies next day.

He was a shrewd old darky, that same King Macondai.

Did he suspect their motive?

It began to look so.

Morning would soon be upon them, and with its coming—since it was the custom of the Apingi to drag their canoes far up into the mountain pass when not in use—all hope might as well be banished at once.

"You are right, we have no time to lose," Harry had said after some moments' contemplation; and both rising the boy canoeists mingled with the dancers who thronged the single street of Nomba-Ombana, slowly working their way toward the temple hut.

It was a difficult undertaking, but they managed to accomplish it at last.

Little by little they contrived to separate themselves from the Apingi who pressed about them, finally gaining the entrance to the hut, situated, as we have already stated, at the extreme end of the village.

They had arrived at a fortunate moment.

The exterior of the hut was unguarded, the men usually stationed to keep watch over the door having joined the dancers as they had hoped.

Securing their guns from the concealment in which they had previously placed them, the boys now silently undid the rude fastenings of the door.

The hut was shrouded in total darkness.

"Here, let me go first," whispered Harry, putting himself in front of his friend. "Thank goodness, I have still a few matches left, and at the risk of drawing the whole village down upon us, propose to strike a light, or first thing we know one of us will be in the hole."

The striking the match revealed a dimly lighted interior, with the hideous idols staring at them from their several niches.

There also was the great opening in the rocky floor, just as they had seen it on the occasion of their previous visit, now two months ago.

"Do you know I can't bring myself to believe that there is any one down there?" whispered Archie Ryan as he closed the door behind him. The whole thing happened so long ago that it all seems to me like a dream."

"Hush! don't speak an unnecessary word," was the whispered response.

And the king beside the opening, Harry breathed the name of Dr. Dennerlein aloud.

There was a profound silence.

"Heavens! What if he had died!" whispered Archie in a terrified voice.

It was a horrible suggestion.

In the weeks which had elapsed there was no telling what might have happened.

A cold perspiration broke over Harry Hinton from head to foot as, in a louder voice, he called the name of the explorer again.

"Dr. Dennerlein! Dr. Dennerlein!"

"Who calls me?"

With the same thunderous echo the reply came as from a distance, far down in the depth of the cave.

"I'd like to know how we are ever going to get down there," queried Archie, seeing new obstacles now that the first great fear was removed.

Without heeding him, Harry repeated their names at the mouth of the cave.

Then, as before, footsteps were heard approaching.

Presently, from a point directly beneath the opening, the voice of the explorer came again:

"Thank God, you are come at last, my friends. Is everything in readiness?"

"The canoes are at the termination of the pass."

"Yes—yes! Macondai has kept me informed. Why were you not here sooner? It must be almost morning."

Harry explained.

"Can he suspect our intentions?" came the voice from below. "If so, we have not a moment to lose. Now, boys, muster all your courage. You have got to drop into this hole—a distance of some thirty feet."

Here was no pleasant prospect, but the boys did not waver.

Lowering himself into the opening, Harry Hinton, without a moment's hesitation, dropped into the darkness, striking with a force which well nigh stunned him upon the rocky floor beneath.

"Are you hurt?" questioned a kindly voice beneath him, and Harry felt himself raised by the hands of a man whose form he could not even discern.

"Not a bit."

"Then let your friend follow. We will have a light presently, and take a look at each other, but not now."

"I am thankful for that. What a frightful place this is. Positively I don't see how you managed to live here at all."

"This is not where I stay the greater part of the time," responded the voice from out of the darkness. "It is only the entrance. My chamber is much more airy as you will presently see. But let us not delay a moment. Why does not your friend follow you down?"

"Come on, Arch!" called Harry, placing himself beneath the opening, his voice reverberating in a thunderous manner; "Come on—why do you hesitate?"

"What shall I do with the guns—drop them? They will be destroyed if I do."

"Guns!" exclaimed the doctor. "Have you got guns? That is fortunate. Here, I'll fix that all right."

He hurried away in the darkness, returning after a moment with a heavy leopard skin, as he informed Harry, who could see absolutely nothing, and placed it directly under the mouth of the cave.

"Now drop the guns," he said. "How many are there?"

"Two."

"And here's one of them down all right. Now for the other!"

The second rifle was dropped through the hole.

Scarcely had it fallen than a tremendous shouting was heard above them, a blaze of light at the same time breaking over the mouth of the cave.

"What is that?" cried Archie Ryan as he landed safely upon the leopard skin spread by Dr. Dennerlein for his reception.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE PARTISAN CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

"Quick! Quick!" cried Archie Ryan as he landed safely upon the leopard skin spread by Dr. Dennerlein for his recep-

and half his people are upon us. It's all up now, unless——"

A loud pressed breath came from the mouth of Archie Ryan, suddenly short.

"Follow and keep silent."

And as the voice of King Macondai was heard calling aloud through the opening, commanding the presence of his prophet, Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan felt their hands grasped with firm pressure, and themselves led by their unseen guide further into the dark recesses of the cave.

The distance of a few hundred feet traversed, and their hands were suddenly released.

"Single file! Keep close to me!" whispered the voice ahead.

Through a narrow passage, a short distance along an uneven rocky floor, and the boys suddenly emerged into a large, square apartment lighted by a flaring torch of a resinous material in common use among the Apingi, which enabled them for the first time to see the face of the man to rescue whom they had gone through so much.

He was a tall, stately being of German descent, with regular facial features, hair and beard of great length—the latter reaching almost to his waist—and both as white as snow.

Nor did Dr. Dennerlein regard the boys less curiously, still there was no time to waste in idle words.

Back in the recesses of the cavern out of which they had come could be heard the voice of Macondai, "Mbanal! Mbanal!" which Dr. Dennerlein hurriedly interpreted as "Mbanal!" was the name of the defunct prophet who had once dwelt in the cavern which the King had inherited on descending upon himself.

"They are after us!" cried Harry. "This place is a perfect trap—don't you hear them coming? It would have been better if we had never attempted this thing at all."

And indeed it looked so.

To all outward appearance there was no means of leaving the apartment but by the way they had entered; still it was observed by the boys, and this served to raise their drooping spirits—that Dr. Dennerlein did not show the least alarm.

Dashing to a rude chest in one corner, he hastily possessed himself of a collection of papers and returned to the side of the boys.

"My journals!" he exclaimed; "they must be saved at all hazards. Macondai has seen the last of his prophet—he will not be able to raise a hand to prevent our leaving the cave—you shall see!"

Moving toward a large flagstone which seemed to have been placed as a seat before a second and still larger fragment of rock, Dr. Dennerlein raised the heavy stone toward the opening, barely large enough to admit the body of a man.

"Seize the torch and drop through that hole," he whispered. "Quick! Quick! In another instant it will be too late. It is not deep."

It was done!

First Harry, with the torch, then Archie with the guns, last of all the doctor himself, and the great stone fell back into its place once more.

"Mbanal! Mbanal! Mbanal!" echoed the voice of the King above them, while the rush of many feet could be heard overhead.

"Let him call himself hoarse," whispered the doctor, jubilantly. "His Mbanal will never answer him again."

He now seized the torch from Harry's hand and led the way through a passage so low studded that the boys were obliged to bend themselves almost double to prevent striking their heads against the rocks above.

"Is there no danger that they will follow us?" whispered Harry, doubtfully.

"Not the slightest," replied the doctor. "This cavern is unknown to Macondai, of that I am certain. You may speak as

soon as you choose, there is no danger of our voices being heard in the cave.

"While I wait to know if they got down through the hole without jumping as we did?" asked Archie Ryan. "I heard them coming just as I dropped the first gun, and you had better believe I was scared. I expected nothing but to have them leap after me and——"

"Were you seen, do you think?" asked Dr. Dennerlein.

"I don't think so. I dropped the instant I heard them at the door of the hut.

"Then Macondai had himself lowered into the cave by a rope, in the usual manner. That takes time, and is just what saved us. I doubt if he knows now that you are with me. Probably he came to consult me previous to starting upon his expedition. You know the whole affair has been arranged by my advice."

"And when he finds you missing?" suggested Harry.

"He may suspect something, if he is not too drunk," was the reply of the doctor. "What remains for us to do is to get to the bottom of the river at the foot of the mountain pass below the Apingi, if an attempt is made to head us off, once in the canoes——"

"Once in the canoes, we can defy them all!" cried Harry. "You shall see."

By this time the passage had brought them out into a large cavern, the floor of which had a sharp descent downward; so steep was it as to call for the greatest care in making the descent.

On, on they went, deeper and still deeper, until a full half hour must certainly have elapsed.

Everywhere they met wonderful forms of stalactites and rock crystals flashed back the light of the torch, but the boys had neither time nor disposition to inspect them.

Dr. Dennerlein, who had now assumed the lead, moved with great caution, and they did quite as much as they could do to follow close behind.

The atmosphere was fearfully hot and oppressive, strange noises were heard at intervals beneath their feet.

"I don't like this," muttered the doctor at last, as the sounds continued to repeat themselves. "I have passed through here a thousand times. Usually this cave is dreadfully cool. These noises puzzle me. I never heard anything like them before."

"I was just on the point of inquiring about them," said Harry. "What causes them do you suppose?"

The question had scarce been put when a loud report like muffled thunder resounded through the cavern, and the rock beneath their feet trembled like a ship in a storm.

From the roof above came a perfect shower of stalactites and loose pieces of rock, several striking the travelers, one wounding Archie Ryan severely on the head.

"Heaven above me! It is an earthquake!" breathed the doctor. "If the passage to the river should be closed by it we are lost!"

The first tremors had ceased, calling upon his companions to follow with all possible speed.

They had not advanced a dozen yards before there came a second shock far more violent than the first.

So severe was it that all three were flung down with great violence, while from above and beyond these came a tremendous crash.

What had happened?

From the sound it seemed the mountains above them was being rent in twain.

"Oh, no!" cried Dr. Dennerlein, making his voice heard above the thunderous din. "It is but a short distance to the river now. My friends we are still in the hands of God!"

And they hurried on.

Through vast chambers and divisions windings, over the treacherous rock led them until at last entering a narrow

passage the faint light of early dawn could be seen ahead. Now the shock had passed and the way still lay open before them.

With a shout of encouragement Dr. Dennerlein dashed his torch to the earth and sprang toward the welcome light.

It was gained in a moment, and the boys found themselves standing upon a rocky shelf with a river beneath their feet.

Crash!

They were none too soon.

Archie Ryan came out last, and he had scarce advanced three feet beyond the mouth of the cave when the earthquake shock was repeated with tremendous force.

The ground seemed to rise beneath their feet, and at the same instant a huge fragment of rock toppled from the overhanging ledge, closing forever the passage out of the prophet's cave, through which they had but just emerged.

"God help us, we are lost!" cried Dr. Dennerlein, as the shock subsided.

"No, lost!" repeated the doctor, waving his hand before him. "See, half the mountain has fallen into the rocky gorge through which runs the river. We are in a perfect cul-de-sac. There are the canoes at our feet, but we cannot use them. We have escaped from the cave only to be recaptured or perish miserably in this horrid hole."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THROUGH THE JAWS OF DEATH—THE END.

"Mbana! Mbana! Mbana!"

From above the heads of Dr. Dennerlein and the boy canoeists of the Quanza a wild shout went up.

"There! There! Look there! It is all up now!" breathed Harry Hinton, directing the gaze of his companions toward the mountain slope above them.

All looked in the direction indicated.

The line of the mountain pass by which the young canoe builders had so often descended during the past month stretched above them, and by the light of the rising sun they could perceive Macondai and his Apingi warriors brandishing their spears and rushing down the pass with tremendous speed shouting their prophet's name.

"We are lost, indeed," murmured Dr. Dennerlein, sadly. "We can neither advance nor retreat. However, do not fear for your lives, my young friends. My influence with the king is great, and they will not harm us. It is as it is written from the depths of my heart, I thank you for having risked your lives on my account. If I could set you free at the expense of my own, I would do it willingly, but fate has willed it otherwise—our escape is not to be."

"Do you say so?" cried Harry, with a quick glance about him. "Then I don't, and won't. I'd rather die than live among this barbarous people any longer. See, doctor, there is one way out of this trap left yet."

He waved his hand toward the river which lay almost beneath their feet.

Truly there was a way, and a terrible one.

Rat asunder by the force of the earthquake shock, huge masses of the coarse, disintegrated limestone which formed the cliffs on either side of the rocky gorge had fallen over into the bed of the stream, choking the passage above and below them.

It was a narrow, shallow channel, but the river did not flow fast. The water was still, and the boys could see the bottom. They were not far from the mouth of the cave, and the water was not more than four feet above the surface of the rocks.

To embark in the canoes and shoot beneath this obstruction was what the brave fellow proposed.

Could they do this successfully?

As to the extent of the toppling mass which threatened to settle down into the river bed at any moment, they could only surmise, since from the position in which they stood its end could not be described.

Still there was the passage under it, and freedom with all its possibilities of escape from this unknown land lay beyond.

Dr. Dennerlein was sure that the thing was impossible.

As they viewed it the passage lay beneath the rock, but could they be assured of what lay beyond.

It was freedom or slavery—perhaps life or death.

With every wasted second the Apingi drew nearer, their wild shouts echoing back from the surrounding cliffs.

"It's now or never!" shouted Harry Hinton. "Doctor, will you make the attempt?"

"I cannot refuse if it is your wish, my friends," replied the explorer, sadly; "but believe me, we are going to our death!" It is done!

Even as the Apingi warriors gain the spot but just now vacated, the boy canoeists and Dr. Dennerlein shoot beneath the tottering pile.

Each have taken a canoe, choosing those of their own build rather than the ruder craft of the Apingi, and lying flat upon their backs, with their rifles beside them, launched themselves upon the rushing stream.

One moment of flashing sunlight with the shouts of the blacks ringing in their ears, and all opportunity for retreat has vanished.

Now all is darkness and rushing waters.

Rock above—to the right, the left.

As they fly onward they can feel it almost brush their faces now and again, so small is the intervening space.

What if the space should be utterly annihilated?

What if some low, projecting point of the rock should be encountered in that awful blackness?

Then, of a certainty, would come the end.

On and still on, now whirling this way, now that, until a glad cry from Harry Hinton, whose canoe had taken the lead, tells his companions that the end has come.

"Light ahead—light ahead!"

It needs not the telling, for all can see it.

It is scarce told then all three canoes shoot out into the open.

"Hurrah!" cries Archie Ryan with a shout which echoes back from the towering cliffs upon either side of them, "we are afloat once more—afloat and homeward bound!"

They had passed the rubicon, and not a moment too soon.

The echo of Archie's shout had not yet died away when, with a dull crash, the great mass of rock beneath which their passage had been made settled down into the river's bed.

And as the force of the current swept them onward the boy canoeists and the rescued explorer gazed at one another with blanched faces and thankful hearts.

They had passed in safety through the jaws of death.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I'm afraid," said Colonel Rodney, who had risen to address the Brideport Canoe Club at a meeting held upon a certain evening nearly three years after the ship bearing Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan had sailed away; "I am afraid we may as well face the inevitable and admit that our fellow members who so gravely risked their lives in the attempt to discover Dr. Dennerlein, the African explorer, are numbered among the dead. For my own part, gentlemen, I shall never come to blame myself for having lent my aid to such a desperate undertaking; but as the old saying is, 'it is better to be a fool than to be a fool's friend,' and as I am not pleased with my remarks upon this occasion, I am not going to say any more. Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!"

Away down at the other end of the long building the members of the Brideport Canoe Club who sat nearest the door had sprung from their seats, and, with vociferous cheers, gathered about two deeply-bronzed, sturdy young fellows, who, together with a venerable old gentleman of foreign appearance had entered unperceived by the speaker.

It was Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan back again, and what was more, there was Dr. Dennerlein, the lost explorer with them safe and sound.

From that day the Brideport Canoe Club became the most famous organization of its kind in the land.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reader, there have been many published accounts offered to the public professing to be true and faithful narratives of the discovery of the lost African explorer, Dr. Dennerlein, but the narrative herewith submitted alone records the truth.

The journey down the river—which in honor of the famous explorer, was named the "Dennerlein,"—to its junction with the Quanza, was performed in safety.

Thence by the Quanza the little party made their way to Dendo, the entire journey consuming several weeks.

Friendly tribes assisted their progress, and though their passage through this unknown land was marked by many singular happenings, no serious obstacle occurred to cause delay.

Warned by their past experience care was taken to pass through the Nagoshi country at night, which was accomplished in safety, and with their arrival at the Quissima villages all probability of mishap came to an end.

At Dendo the boys found their old friend Captain Estanza just ready to sail for St. Paul de Loanda, and accompanying him to that port embarked three weeks later for Liverpool on an English steamer.

While at Loanda they were waited upon by the American consul, who made ample apology for his rude treatment, and told how Burt Rodney and his companion arriving before them on the occasion of their former visit, had blackened their characters by his false statements, saying that it was the wish of his father—who was well known to the consul—that they should be placed under arrest and sent back to the United States.

It was a sad affair.

The consul who had taken the trouble to communicate with

Colonel Rodney had long before the return of the canoeists learned the truth.

All Brideport gloried in the doings of her now famous sons.

The learned societies of America, and of Europe to boot, showered their favors upon the canoe club and its courageous members.

Colonel Rodney alone had cause for sorrow, for, although he never mentions his name, it is well known that he deeply mourns the sad fate of his wayward son.

Of course Harry Hinton and Archie Ryan received the medals and the promised reward.

This, of course, was pleasing, but it was nothing to the pleasure experienced in the feeling that through their efforts Dr. Dennerlein had been restored to the bosom of his family and honor bestowed upon their native town.

The full details of the robbery of the canoe club safe were never known.

Burt Rodney's dying confession had explained this in part, but what disposition was made of such money as was left over after the outfit of himself and his companion had been purchased—and this must have been considerable—remains a mystery to this day.

With the money received for their services in rescuing the lost explorer, Harry and Archie entered into business together in Brideport.

Though now thoroughly engrossed in the cares which a proper devotion to business must ever bring, it is safe to say that the boy canoeists of the Quanza are not likely to forget the dangers they encountered so courageously in their journey

THROUGH AN UNKNOWN LAND.

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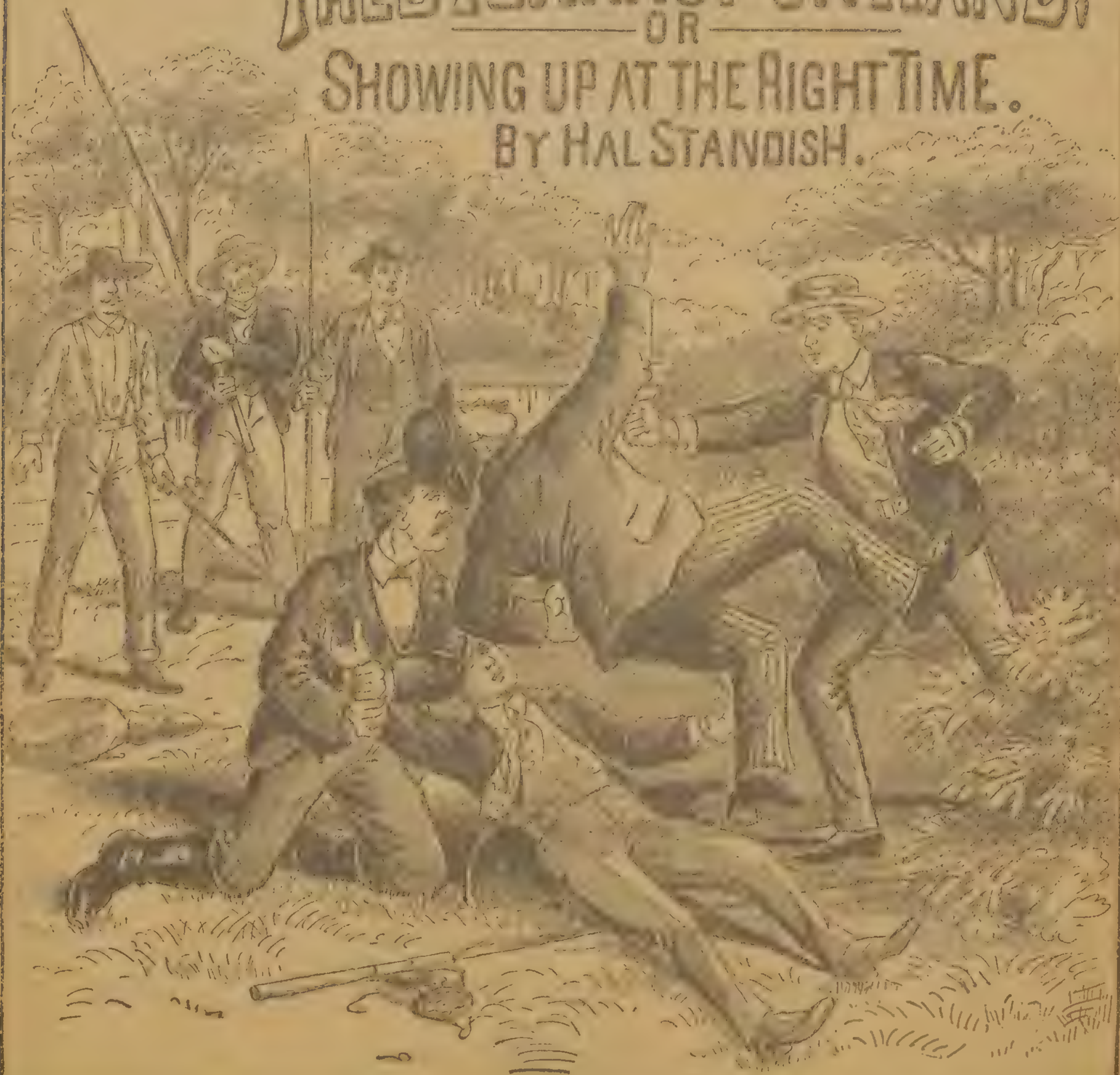
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